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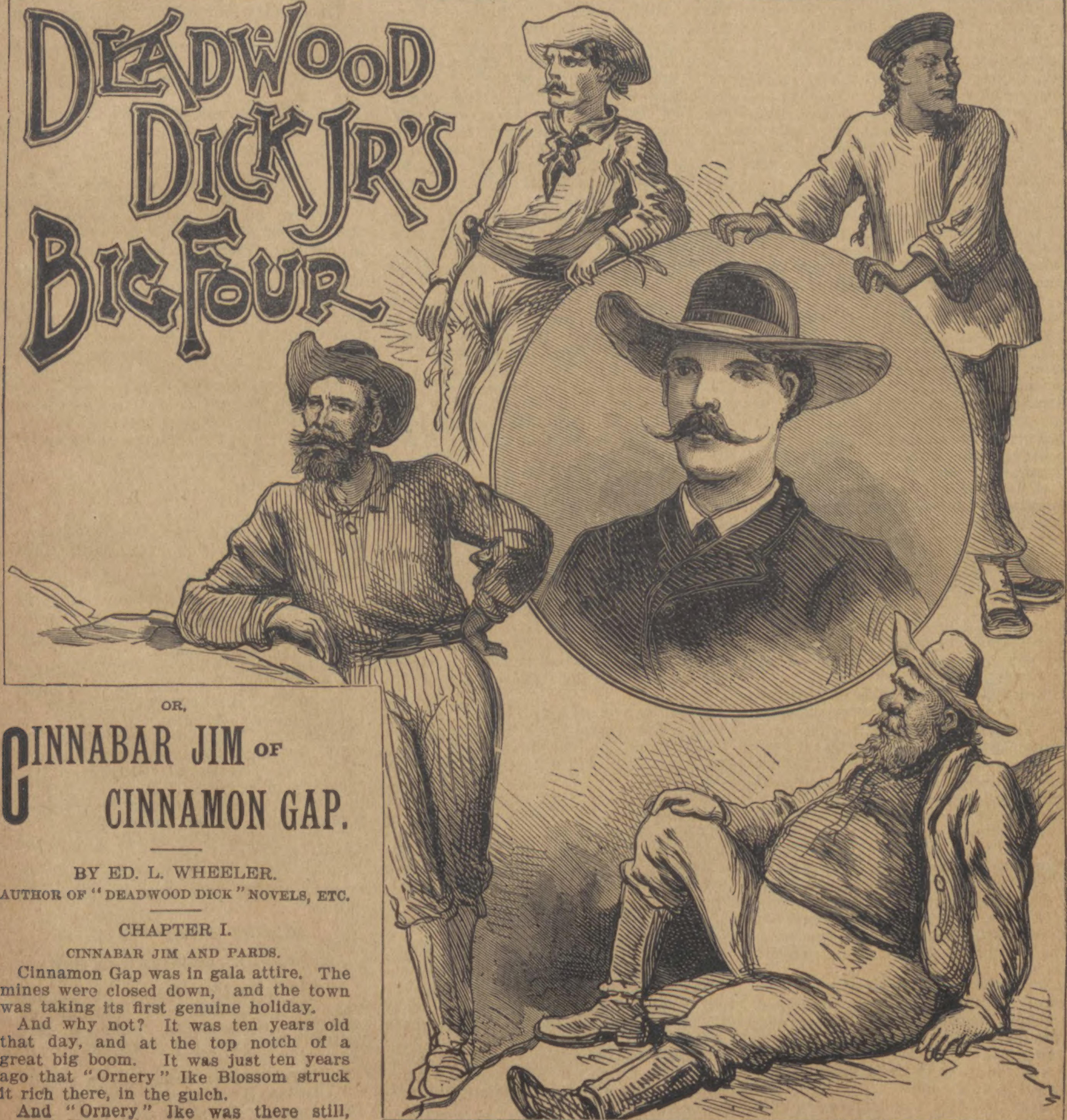
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DEADWOOD DICK JR.'S Big Four



OR, CINNABAR JIM OF CINNAMON GAP.

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AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

CINNABAR JIM AND PARDS.

Cinnamon Gap was in gala attire. The mines were closed down, and the town was taking its first genuine holiday.

And why not? It was ten years old that day, and at the top notch of a great big boom. It was just ten years ago that "Ornery" Ike Blossom struck it rich there, in the gulch.

And "Ornery" Ike was there still,

now mayor of the camp, the richest man in all that section and yet maintaining well his reputation as the "orneriest cuss in seventeen counties." He was a "bad man" clear down to the ground, as they said of him.

He it was who, by proclamation, had ordered this great holiday in the camp's honor, and it was his intention to see to it that it "topped" anything that camp or any other had ever seen. Notice had been given weeks before of the big event to come off on that date, and printed handbills had been scattered far and near.

As a result, as early as two days before the day set strangers had begun to pour into the gulch to attend the jubilee, and the town was taxed to its utmost capacity to entertain its guests.

Nor was this all. So widely had the camp's great jubilee been advertised, that it drew additional attractions for the day.

First, there was Don Gilfrano's "Great Spanish-American Circus" at one end of the gulch just outside the camp limits, with its white tents covering a full acre or more of ground, all included.

Then, at the opposite end of the gulch, just on the edge of the camp in that direction, was another great white tent, low and long and wide, over which floated a large flag of plainest, purest white, without spot or blemish upon its field anywhere.

The big tent of the circus was gay with the flags of all nations; this last-mentioned tent had but the one simple flag described.

Naturally, it drew the attention and awakened the curiosity of each new arrival.

As soon as it was fairly daylight, on this great day, the town began to "whoop it up," and by the middle of the forenoon things were getting lively, as can be imagined.

"Ornery" Ike had not neglected to prepare the camp for the reception and regalement of its visitors. He had erected a brand new one-story dance hall of mammoth proportions, in the centre of the camp, where it had been necessary to demolish a dozen smaller buildings to make way for it.

As he said: "This hyer sort of thing don't happen every day, and while we are about et let's do ther thing proper."

In front of this new building, about the middle of the forenoon, four newcomers who had entered the camp from the south trail through Cinnamon Gap proper, paused to take their first survey of the town.

The gulch in which the town lay ran east and west, and one entering from the south could see but little of it until the whole burst upon his sight at once when he emerged from the Gap into the gulch. Hence, these newcomers had stopped short to look.

And a curious, cosmopolite collection they were, truly.

First, perhaps, in order of brief description, should be the man who seemed to be the leading spirit of the company.

He was tall, finely formed, clad in true Western style, with a broad-brimmed hat of fine material under which floated a wealth of golden hair that a woman might envy.

His face was one that, once seen, was not easily forgotten. It was an almost perfect face, features large but regular and finely formed, and a skin as fair as a woman's. With the bluest of eyes, there was the glint in their depth which betokened a high spirit.

The next to notice, taking them as they come, was a big, burly fellow, roughly

clad in a blue shirt, rough trousers, and coarse boots, wearing a full, shaggy and bristling beard—as homely a man as eye ever rested upon.

Then there was a Chinee, in native attire, a Celestial of medium stature, having the saffron skin and all the other peculiar characteristics of his race.

The last to be noted was a Dutchman, short of stature and almost as rotund as he was tall. He had a big, heavy face, and the fieriest of noses. He had mustache and whiskers, and was roughly dressed.

"Well, boys, what do you think of the lay-out?" inquired the man first described.

"What do we think of et?" repeated the homely one. "Wull, now, Cinnabar Jim, you kin kick me fer a cub ef et ain't jist ther star-bangledest sight I ever seen in my life, sure as my name is Purty Pete!"

"Yaw, yaw, dot vas so, Cinnabar Chim," spoke up the Dutchman, in a heavy, thick manner. "Chulius Schneezier! yust look at der flags! But, I wonder where ve got some soothin' syrup, ain'dt id? I vas so dry I dinks me dot mein shtomach vas cave in!"

"That's you, swill tub," from Cinnabar Jim, reprovingly. "You will make a hog of yourself, I expect, before the day is done. But don't be in a hurry; your headlight won't go out yet awhile," and he touched the Dutchman's nose with his finger as he spoke.

"Chulius Schneezier! you calls mein nose a headlight?" cried the Teuton, bristling up and brandishing his arms.

"Ha, ha! It looks like one, anyhow, Heintz."

"Mein nose a headlight! Yust say dot von more times, und I vill make you dink I vas a locomotive behind id, sure as my name is Heintz Donnerblitz!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Well, don't get your Dutch up about it, Heintz; we'll find you some soothing syrup by and by. I wonder what that white flag means down yonder? Suppose we take a walk in that direction?"

"No, no, allee samee go othel way," here put in the heathen Chinee.

"What for, Wah Lung?" asked Cinnabar Jim.

"Alle samee see show; see lady lide horse one foot, so; and muchee kickee up heels and jump thlough hoop—Hoolla!"

While the Chinaman said this he danced lightly on one foot, swinging his arms and flapping his big sleeves, holding the other foot out much as a circus performer would do. Whereat the others laughed.

"I know you are in for that sort of thing, Wah Lung, but the performance won't be on till afternoon, and I have some curiosity to know what that white flag means."

"Come erlong, then," cried Purty Pete, leading the way. "Et don't matter a durn to me which end we begin at, so long as we see et all. We aire hyer fur a bang-up time, and I mean ter press every gosh-hanged button I see in sight, you bet!"

"Allee samee all light, me too," chirped the Chinee.

"Dot vas all righdt," assented Heintz Donnerblitz, "but I vants to put me some soothin' syrup under mein pelt before I goes trotting aroundt any more mit you vellers, ain'dt id? Vell, I guess so!"

"And I tell you that you won't get a sniff until we go up there and see what that flag means," said Cinnabar Jim, emphatically.

"Oh! vell, if you means peesness,"

stretching out his broad hands as only a genuine Teuton can, "dot seddles id. Go on mit der funerals, but if I kicks der pucket before ve gets pack, don't say noddings apoud id."

"That's all right, pardner," advised Purty Pete. "You won't die suddent; thar's too much of ye."

"Allee samee no kickee bucket today," decided the Chinee.

They had attracted not a little attention, during their brief altercation, and many eyes followed them as they turned their steps in the direction of the big tent that displayed the white flag.

Had they made inquiry, almost any one could have told them what the white flag meant, but, like nearly all the rest, they preferred to go up and investigate for themselves.

As they drew near, finally, after elbowing their way through the crowded main street, it was noticeable that but few people were around the tent, and that the few who were in sight had evidently taken a hasty look at the front and were retreating.

"Gull durn et," suddenly cried Purty Pete, "I know what et aire, now!"

"Well, what is it?" inquired Cinnabar Jim.

"A smallpox horspittle, b'gosh! Don't ye see ther way folks is leavin' et alone? See what a smashin' big crowd of 'em ain't nowhere to be seen!"

"I venture to say you are wrong, pard," said Cinnabar Jim, smiling. "Anyhow, we'll go and investigate, now that we have come thus far. I am full of curiosity clear up to my chin."

"Unt I vas as py-cosh empty as a peer keg mit der head oudt," asserted Heintz Donnerblitz. "I must have me some soothin' syrup mit mein neck hinunter pootoo gwick, or I plow oop like von shteam polier ven der vater vas got too low, I exbect."

They went on, and in a few moments more were in front of the huge tent with the mysterious insignia floating above it.

One glance at the front, and Cinnabar Jim reverently took off his hat.

CHAPTER II.

NOTICE TO QUIT. A BIG OFFER.

"Ginger!" cried Purty Pete, "I reckon we ain't got no call hyer, pard; let's slope instanter."

"No soothin' syrup on tap dhere, I pet you my poots," hoarsely muttered Heintz Donnerblitz. "Come avay, for I don't feel bleasant ven I runs me oop mit dot kind of instertoochun."

"Allee samee what mean?" demanded the wondering Chinaman, as he glanced from one to another. "Why takee off hat?" to Cinnabar Jim.

"Because I have the profoundest respect for anything and everything in this lie," answered Cinnabar Jim, speaking in earnest. "It always brings to my mind the face of a fair woman whom I used to call mother."

There was no levity on the part of the others now.

On the front of the big tent, over the main entrance, were these words in big letters:

GRAND ARMY CORPS.

SALVATION HEADQUARTERS.

Cinnabar Jim had replaced his hat and was about turning away with his incongruous companions when a man hailed him from the entrance to the tent.

"Ginger!" cried Pete. "He's scoot!"

"Chulius Schneezier!" from the big Dutchman. "I vas wanted right awav guick some oder blaces!"

"You stay right where you are, the three of you," ordered Cinnabar Jim. "I will see what the man wants, and will be with you in a few moments." He advanced to the entrance to the tent.

"You called to me, sir?" he inquired.
"Yes, I want a word with you."

"Very well, sir."

"You are unlike any other man who has stopped before this tent this morning. Many have scoffed, some have gone silently away, but never before in all my experience have I seen a man take off his hat to our flag as you have done."

"And you want to know why I did it?"

"Yes; and more than that. But, your reason? Are you, then—"

"I respect your cause because my mother loved it, sir; that is all. What more do you want to know?"

Cinnabar Jim's face, grim, though handsome when in serious repose, evidently deterred the man from making his inquiry more personal, and he said:

"When I saw that act, and noted your fearless countenance, I believed at once that you had been sent here in answer to our earnest prayers, and so I made bold to come out and hail you."

"Then there is some service I can render you? But, I am afraid not. Yet if there is—"

"I will tell you quickly: You see, our business is to save souls. Knowing what a great debauchery was intended here this day, we determined to come here and plant the standard of our Master and perhaps snatch some soul from the Death. You see I make it plain and straightforward."

"Go on, sir," Cinnabar Jim invited.

"Well, the mayor of this town has sent us notice that we must quit the gulch before noon, or he will destroy our property and scatter our band to the four winds—his words, sir. It is impossible for us to comply, because all our horses and property wagons have gone back to the place of our last encampment to bring up the remainder of our goods. We expect them here by noon."

"You have explained this to the mayor?"

"Yes, but he is obdurate. He sent rejoinder that his word was law in this gulch, and that it would be at the risk of our lives if we remained. He is, I am told, a very wicked man, one who will stop at nothing, and for that reason I am greatly alarmed for the safety of myself and company."

"Do you happen to know whether you are in the town limits or outside of them?"

"We are just over the line; I made sure of that by inquiring of several citizens before we put up our tent."

"If that is the case, don't trouble your head about the mayor; I will take care of him for you if he goes to cutting up any of his pranks."

"I would not have you risk yourself on our account, sir; I thought by your looks that you might be a man of some influence here, and that a word from you to the mayor would have weight. Are you a stranger?"

"Yes, I am a stranger here, sir."

"Then do not, I beg of you, endanger your life for us. We will put our trust in One who has promised to be with us."

"And you can count me in, too," assured Cinnabar Jim. "I am no saint, but thank heaven I had a mother who was, and your flag was her flag. If this mayor makes any attempt to pull that flag down he will find a chap just about my size in his way."

"I desire no trouble; I am afraid—"

"I am not afraid; and as for the trouble, it may not come. If it does come, it will not be of your making."

"But, you are only one against the many, sir. What can you hope to do? If you could influence the mayor—that was what I had in mind when I called to you, sir."

"And I think I can persuade him that he is in the wrong," Cinnabar Jim assured. "I will undertake to carry a message to him, if there is anything you want to say to him, sir."

"Nothing more can be said; I have explained the situation to him, and he will not accept the excuse."

"Then you would pull down your flag for one man of that stamp?"

"What better can I do? He claims to have authority over the gulch, and rather than endanger the lives of those dear to me I would withdraw to a distance; but, it is impossible."

"Have you told him that you are not within the limits of his town?"

"No, I have not told him that; he must know it."

"Then that is the message I will carry to him for you, and I'll see what effect it will have upon him. You are not on his ground, and my advice is to keep that flag flying. Got any women and children here?"

"Yes, we have our wives with us, and some of us have children."

"That makes it more serious. Tell you what I will do: I will go and see this man for you, and size him up and see just how very bad he really is. Then I will come back and advise you what will be the best thing for you to do."

"If you would do that, sir, you would—"

"Say nothing about it; I am glad to chip in my weight on the side of the weak and oppressed at any time. You said he gave you till noon?"

"Till noon, sir."

"Then there is plenty of time. I will be back this way in an hour or so and let you know the result—Hello, who have we here?"

"It is he—it is the mayor of Cinnabar Gap!"

The man of piety turned pale, but he stood his ground bravely.

"Wull, that thur flag is a-flappin' y't, I see!" roared the newcomer. "When do ye p'pose ter begin to take et down? Mebby ye aire waitin' fer me to do et fer ye; hey?"

"Your pardon, sir, but you are the mayor of this town?" inquired Cinnabar Jim, stepping forward and speaking suavely.

"Yes, that's who I aire; and who ther hot be you?"

"Your name is—is—"

"My name is Ike Blossom, Ornery Ike fer short; and you kin set et down that I am jist ther orneriest cuss alive. Now, who aire you?"

"I am called Cinnabar Jim, and I am one of the most peaceful men you ever ran up against in your life. Pardon me for interrupting your business with these people, but there is a question I want to ask."

"Then ask et mighty sudtent and git."

"Is any of this ground for sale hereabouts? Where does your town line extend to?"

"What ther blazes is that ter you?"

"Well, for a mayor of a town I must say that your civility to strangers is not remarkable. If I can get what I want, and the price suits, I will buy a strip."

"You mean business?"

"Certainly."

"Then that's another thing. I will talk business to you jist as soon as I have

talked et to this gospel galoot fer a space of ten seconds. See hyer, you white-livered hypocrite, you! I give you jist one hour to git that rag down, and till noon to get yer traps out of this hyer gulch, and not another second longer. You hear me?"

"It will be impossible, sir."

"Then et won't be impossible fer me to wipe ye out, and that I'll do, ef ye ain't gone by ther time stated. I'll raze yer shebang to ther ground, and make ye scoot fer yer lives, now mind I tell ye!"

"Have you no feelings for women and children—"

"Not a durn bit! If you have any, git 'em away from hyer. See? I am boss hyer, and my word is law."

With that he turned to Cinnabar Jim, who had given the manager of the gospel tent a signal to keep quiet for the present and let the flag float on as before.

"Now, then, I am ready ter talk business to you."

"Well, your town line, to begin with."

"Et runs straight from that boulder over thar to this one over hyer on this side of ther gulch."

"Good enough. Now, who owns the property this side of the line? I suppose it is a little less valuable than that within the limits, eh?"

"Wull, a trifle so. I am owner of et; used to own ther hull durn gulch when I first made my hit hyer, ten years ago to-day—that's what we're celebratin'; and to think that a blasted salvation—"

"Let's talk business," interrupted Cinnabar. "What will you take for this strip here, beginning at the trail there and running straight back to the hill, with one hundred feet front on the trail? Now if you mean business, set your price."

"My price is ten dollars a foot, stranger."

"All right; I take it. Come to your office and make me out a deed, and I will hand you the money."

"Et seems ter me you aire anxious to buy, ain't ye? This hyer tent is on ther property, and I can't sell ye that. Besides, this is a holiday hyer, and I can't deed et till ter-morrer."

"Never mind the tent, and never mind the holiday. The holiday is only your own local affair. I want the property now or not at all, and I am willing to pay your price for it. Come, now, what do you say? Is it a go? Will you sell at once?"

"See hyer, et strikes me that you aire more 'n anxious ter git this hyer p'tic'lar piece. What is in et? I guess I'll jist raise my price to ten thousand, and see ef ye will come up. Now what do ye say? Ef ye will come to that figure I will write ye a deed, and you kin do what ye please with ther ground. Come, what d'ye say?"

"Very well, I take your offer, sir. Come, now, let's go and see about the deed. I am prepared to buy it, even at that price—Why, what is the matter with you?"

The fact of the business was, the mayor's eyes were starting from their sockets with surprise, and his mouth had dropped open.

He could not believe the evidence of his senses.

CHAPTER III.

"ORNERY" IKE IN A FIX.

While this was going on, Cinnabar Jim's friends had drawn near and had overheard what was being said.

Besides them, there was another man who appeared to be taking some interest in the matter, a man maybe thirty years

of age, well dressed and wearing a hat of broad brim—the usual Western pattern.

He was good-looking, had a neat mustache, and his dark eyes had a deep and keen magnetic expression.

"I guess I won't sell," gasped the mayor of Cinnamon Gap.

"You won't sell?"

"No; I have changed my mind. Ye see, I thought that price would cut ye off ter once."

"But it didn't; I have accepted it; and by accepting it, your own offer, you have to all intents and purposes sold the property to me."

"I don't see et."

"I leave it to any of these gentlemen around us."

"That's kerrect," here chipped in Purty Pete. "Yer will never git another offer like et."

"Yaw, yaw, und you vas one fool shackass if you don't schnap id oop," added Heintz Donnerblitz.

"A bargain is a bargain, old hoss," supplemented the stranger.

Cinnabar Jim cast a glance at him.

"That is what I hold," he declared. "I hold, too, that he has no right to back out."

"See hyer," now demanded the mayor, bristling up, "what do you want to git hold of this hyer ground fer, anyhow? Tell me that and mebby we kin come to terms."

"It is impossible to come to terms with you, I take it," retorted Cinnabar Jim.

"It looks so," opined the stranger. "Besides, have you any proof, my friend, that he owns the land? Maybe that is the reason he is backward about accepting your big offer for it."

"I was taking for granted that he owned it," was the response.

"And I do own et, too!" thundered the mayor. "What is more, I won't sell et now fer double ther price; I begin ter see what yer game is."

"Well, what is my game?"

The stranger, too, seemed interested.

"Ye want to be friendly to these hyer shoutin' hypocrites of gospel sharps hyer, and ye think ef ye owned ther ground you could let 'em stay. I am up to et now, and I want to tell ye that they can't stay, and couldn't stay anyhow. You hear what I say?"

"Yes, and I want you to hear what I say: These people are doing you no harm, and they may do somebody some good; so I intend that they shall remain right here and—"

"You intend they shall remain?"

"That's what I said."

"And whur do I come in? Hully smoke! whur do I come in? Ain't I ther mayor of Cinnamon Gap no more? Ain't I runnin' my own town like I use ter was not more'n ten minutes ago? I must be asleep and dreamin' that I have taken a back seat! Why, you long-haired, blue-eyed, soft-skinned dude, ye, I've a noshun ter sashay into ye and muss up about a section of this hyer gulch with yer durn kerkiss!"

Cinnabar Jim smiled serenely.

The stranger, too, looked on with something of a smile playing about his mouth.

"Think it over before you sail in," advised Cinnabar. "You have heard what I said. You have demanded an impossibility of them, and since you have refused my peaceful overtures in their behalf, since you force it to an issue, why let it be so. That flag will not come down, and the man who attempts to take it down is going to hear something drop!"

The Mayor of Cinnamon Gap snorted

like a maddened bull while he listened to this.

"Wough!" he now cried. "Is a man of mystattur to take sich talk as that from a babby like you? Wull, I fail ter see it. Thet thar flag is a-comin' down, and et is a-comin' down now!"

"I guess not."

"I guess yes! Git out of ther way—" But it so happened that the sport of the yellow hair was right in the way.

"Ornery" Ike tried to brush him aside with a swing of his powerful arm, but somehow, it was impotent for the purpose, while he himself got a tap on the shoulder as a reminder.

It "ather staggered him.

"Now go easy," was the calm word of advice. "I say that flag is going to float there, and if you go to kicking up any more fuss about it you will only get your feelings hurt."

The stranger of the magnetic eyes and dark mustache thrust his hands into his pockets and stood by to witness the outcome, now smiling broadly.

"Will yer git out of my way?"

"I will not."

"Yas yer will."

And with that the big fellow made a rush.

Have we described him? It should be done now, in order that the reader may appreciate what took place.

A great, big, burly, rawboned fellow, with ponderous arms and fists like sledges, a tangle of red hair and beard, and a neck that reminded the observer of an ox.

As he made the rush there came a sudden—spat!

Squarely between the eyes the giant got it, and he was lifted right off his feet and laid on his back with a force that almost finished him.

"Hi-yi!" laughed Wah Lung, as he executed a step or two. "Big cuss go down all in heapee, you bettee. Mabby he no fool 'ound Cinnabar Jim; git all he wanitee he come up again."

"Yaw, yaw, yaw!" Heintz Donnerblitz was roaring, his fat corporosity bobbing up and down like a pudding. "Chulius Schneezier! but dot was so pooty as I ever seen, maybe. Yaw, yaw, yaw! Maybe you pulls down dot flags, hey? Und maybe you don't, ain't id!"

"What do you think of that, stranger?" Purty Pete was at the same time saying to him of the magnetic dark eyes.

"Didn't he do that slick? Wull, I should grin ef he didn't! Ther man what runs up ergaint Cinnabar Jim has got ter have gravel in his craw and ballast in his boots, now I'm tellin' yer. Wough! but et makes me feel like sailin' in myself, by ginger!"

"Maybe ve dakes some soothin' syrup on dot, ain't id."

"Bet yer life we will, Heintzy, old boy!" assented Purty. "Put 'er thar, old sport!"

They shook hands in a violent manner, while the stranger turned to address the hero of their enthusiasm.

"So, you are Cinnabar Jim, are you?" offering a hand. "I have heard of you, and I am glad that we have met at last."

"Here is my hand, but I don't know you. I take you on your hearty manner and your good looks. What do you answer to when called by it?"

"I am known as Deadwood Dick, Jr."

"Is it possible? I suspected it, when you spoke up, but didn't dare hope it was true. I'm delighted."

"Then it is mutual. But, look out; there comes your partner for another round. He won't rest easy till you do him up brown. You won't need any of my help, I guess."

"Well, I should hope not, with a clu sy porpoise like that."

The mayor was getting up on his feet. He appeared a little dazed, and looked a better, a good deal foolish as he glared around. It had all taken place in a little whi and no others had yet been attracted inner, and the spot, the place being, as we ha said, almost deserted.

The great attraction of the day was the camp centre and at the big circents at the other end of the gulch. Allee sam

"Wh-r-rr-rrr!" the red giant roared. "Whur be I at? Who was et throwet that thar boulder and took me in the head? But, et wull take more'n that to lay me out. I tell yet that thar flag come down!"

"You had better exercise your horse sense and lope off," warned the yellow-haired sport. "You will get more than you want if you don't."

"I see, ye aire haff a dozen ter one. Which one of these hyer hit me that clip?"

"None of them did it, sir. And it is not six to one, either. I am the only man you are running up against. Now take my advice and go with what you have got."

"That's 'cause ye aire skart that ye say that; I know how et is! By ther hully smoke ef I don't l'arn ye a thing or two—"

Spat! again. The big fellow was rushing in while threatening.

The yellow-haired sport's fist took him in the same place again, this time harder than before, and he went over with force enough to break his neck.

"I guess that will satisfy him," remarked Cinnabar, coolly.

"He is a pig if it doesn't," agreed Deadwood Dick, Jr. "Let me take that hand again, Cinnabar Jim."

"And it will give me pleasure to take yours. Boys, this gentleman is one we have often heard about, Deadwood Dick, Jr. Faithful followers of mine," he added, to Dick.

"Pless mein soul!" cried Donnerblitz, shading his eyes with his hand while he looked. "Burty Bete, dis means zwei toses soothin' syrup!"

"I reckon et do, Dutchey, fer a fact," spoke Purty Pete.

They looked around to see where the Chinee was.

He was sitting astride the fallen giant, with a big pistol aimed at the fellow's nose.

"Him allee samee tly to pullee pop," the Celestial explained, "but me mountee him blame quick, you bettee!"

"Yes, I am never afraid of any one's getting in a foul shot at me when you are around, Wah Lung. Deadwood Dick, Jr., these are three of the best trumps a fellow ever held!"

"And with yourself, a royal flush, I should say," returned Dick. "By the way, how would you like to join with me in a case I have on hand, Cinnabar Jim? Now that I am known to the mayor here, I'll have my hands more than full alone, and the case is a big one."

"Why, we'll do it, gladly," agreed Cinnabar Jim. "At the same time I'll be glad to have your backing in a little game that I have undertaken to play. What do you say?"

They were speaking in low tones, so that the mayor could not overhear their remarks.

"What do I say? Here is my hand on it. There is going to be a big time here this day, Cinnabar Jim, and it will be well for us both to stand shoulder to shoulder. You are as good a man as

his fe
nd look or a better, and with your pards you
l arounl be my Big Four."

They shook hands in the heartiest
racted inner, and turned their attention again
we ha the fallen chieftain of Cinnamon Gap.
The Chinee was still sitting straddle of
y was m, with his pistol aimed straight be
g circ'een his eyes.

Allee samee don't squirm," the Celestial
roar was admonishing. "Me give finger
hrowe pullee, you go hot placee allee
n the mee sooner than quickee, you bettee!
hat ta meanee biz!"

You let me up from hyar!" the czar
f the gulch was roaring. "Ef ye don't,
horse a lunk-headed lizzard ef I don't most
ellowarnally rip ye limb from gizzard when
tha do git up! Take that 'ar gun away
rom my nose, d'ye hear? Blast yer
izen yaller hide!"

Look out you don't get too frisky,"
also admonished Heintz Donnerblitz,
it is coming to the support of the Chinee with
only gun in hand that looked like a minia
ture ten-inch Krupp.

"Keep yer shirt on, ye rantankerous
critter," put in Purty Pete, he too pre
senting a formidable weapon at the man's
head.

The mayor of Cinnamon Gap was in a
"diffikilt."

CHAPTER IV.

DICK AND JIM CONSULT.

Cinnabar Jim now spoke up.

"Let the fellow up, Wah Lung," he di
rected.

The Chinee obeyed at once, and the
mayor was allowed to get upon his feet.

He found himself under the cover of
a pair of guns in the hands of the Chinee,
and also those held by Donnerblitz and
Purty Pete.

"Well, Mr. Mayor," remarked Cinnabar
Jim, with aggravating coolness, "you
sashayed into me as you said you would,
but I do not see that you accomplished
much by the operation."

"I didn't set out ter lick all ther
nations of ther yearth," was the hot re
ort. "You couldn't do nothin' with me
ef ye had been alone, and I dar' ye ter
let me have a fair and square show at
ye now. I'll tackle any two of ye, with
a pair o' guns!"

"We are not looking for fight, sir,"
was the rejoinder to that. "Now I want
to whisper a word of advice in your ear,
if you will have it."

"I don't want none of your advice!"

"Well, I'll give it to you anyhow. It
is this: That you go back into town and
attend strictly to the business you have
got in hand for the day, and do not
trouble your head any further about
these salvation people and their flag. If
you will do that, there will be peace here;
if not, war."

"Et wull be war, that's what et wull
be! I want you to understand that Or
nery Ike Blossom, ther pizenest man
from Venomville, is mayor of this hyer
town of Cinnamon Gap, and that his
word goes! See? I say tha will be
no gospel slingin' hyer to-day, and I
mean et. You'll see!"

And with that he turned and walked off
with long strides in the direction of the
camp centre.

"A fair word of warning," Cinnabar
Jim shouted after him. "The man who
tries to haul down this flag will get
himself so full of splinters that he will
think he has run un against a whole
hemlock lumberyard!"

"Whur-rr-rrr!" was the angry snarl
that was sent back in retort.

"Well, the ball has opened," observed
Deadwood Dick, Jr.

"Yes, and with a vengeance."

"What was the trouble—about this
flag?"

Cinnabar explained the situation brief
ly, and the stand he had taken in the
matter.

"You are right," Deadwood Dick, Jr.,
approved. "Like you, I have profound
respect for good things, and I'll back
you to the last bullet, if need be. I am
sorry it has come up, nevertheless. It
may complicate matters terribly, for now
we are Ishmaels—our hands against them
all."

"Just the situation I usually find my
self in," assured Cinnabar Jim.

The manager of the gospel tent now
came forward, and asked:

"What do you think I had better do,
gentlemen? I heard and saw all that
took place, and I confess my soul is
troubled. I thank you for your offer
of protection, but, what can you hope
to do against that man and his horde of
followers? I believe that he is wicked
enough to kill you."

"Not a doubt about that, sir," agreed
Cinnabar Jim. "Are you and your peo
ple armed?"

"No, sir."

The yellow-haired sport shook his
head. This was something he could not
quite comprehend—men going unarmed
in that wild region.

"You see," the preacher went on, "we
have never been molested, and this
trouble is entirely new in our experience.
If there were time I would move away
to avoid trouble."

"And as there is not time there is
nothing you can do but to brave it out,
I guess. You cannot move without the
means of getting away, and if I were in
your place I would nail that flag to the
mast and stay right here; but, then, we
are different."

"Yes, for we are people of peace."

"And I'm a man of peace, too; but
when a fight is forced upon me, I am not
going to fold my arms and submit tame
ly."

"Well, well, dangers are to be ex
pected. There is One in whom I put my
trust. I will make it a subject of prayer
and trust to Providence for the rest.
Again I thank you."

With that the good man bowed and
withdrew into his tent.

Deadwood Dick, Jr., and Cinnabar Jim
sauntered off in the direction of the camp
centre.

The Westerner, the Dutchman, and the
Chinee followed after them, all smiling
broadly over what had taken place, and
all talking at a lively rate.

"I believe there is going to be se
rious trouble here," observed Deadwood
Dick, Jr.

"And I am pretty certain of it," agreed
Cinnabar Jim. "Ornery Ike Blossom, as
he calls himself, is not the man to sub
mit tamely to the defeat he has just
met."

"I am not alarmed about our own
safety," averred Dick, "for I have
never dropped into the hard crowd yet
that I didn't get out of; but I do feel
concern for those Christian people whose
desire to do good has led them to come
into Cinnamon Gap."

"It will rest with us to protect them,
I guess."

"And what the preacher said was all
too true. We are only a handful against
such a mob as the mayor can do doubt
raise."

"Well, we will do our little best, that's
all we can do. I have no doubt we
can find some backers if we stir around

about it, and maybe when it comes to
the pinch we will be enough for them."

"We won't borrow trouble, anyhow."

"And this case of yours, what is it?
You said you desired the help of myself
and pards."

"Yes, I would like to have you for
my Big Four, as I dubbed you. I am on
track of a diamond necklace worth at
least a hundred thousand dollars—"

"Whew!"

"That was stolen a month ago from
a royal personage who was visiting the
City of Mexico. Don Gilfrano's 'Great
Spanish-American Circus' was there
at the time, and one or two little things
I have picked up in the way of clews
have led me to follow the circus for
a while."

"And that is why you are here to-day,
of course. Then there is some one con
nected with the circus whom you sus
pect?"

"Yes, a female performer known on
the bills as Dona Mariquita. I have
been trying to get a peep into her dress
ing room while she has been performing,
but so far without success."

"Wah Lung is the chap who can per
form that little trick for you. Of all the
ways that are dark and the tricks that
are vain—nit, he is the possessor of the
grand majority. For any piece of down
right sly business, a heathen Chinee
leads the van."

"Then I believe I will take him on
your recommendation and see what he
can do for me. Is he perfectly honest?"

"As honest as any of them. He is
honest with me."

"Well, we won't let him know the
value of the gems, while, on the other
hand, I will offer him a pretty stiff re
ward if he can unearth them for me."

"That will be the way to fix it. But,
go on with the story; you have not told
me how you have come to connect this
Dona Mariquita with the theft of the
diamonds."

"You see, a private performance was
given before the President of the Re
public and his guests, these royal per
sonages I have spoken of, and the one
who lost the gems wore them on that
occasion. She was so well pleased with
the performance of Dona Mariquita that
she visited her after the performance
and made her a present."

"Yes. She remembered well that they
were on her neck while the performance
was in progress; shortly after her visit
to the performers she missed them. There
you have the case in a nutshell."

"And you think she has got them?"

"Well, I am following up the clew to
find out. You see, as I said, one or two
things point to her as the guilty one—no
need for me to go into the minutiae. If
she has not got them, some other of the
performers may have them; but I look
deeper than that."

"Then it must be a case, with a ven
geance."

"Oh, it is big, as I told you. In the first
place, the reward offered is the neat little
sum of ten thousand dollars—"

"Whew!" Cinnabar Jim whistled
again.

"And then, as I was going to say, I
look deeper than the surface. I have
been impressed with the idea that one
of the royal party may have purloined
the gems—"

"Ah-ha! Now you make it something
worth while, to say nothing about the
value of the diamonds and the handsome
reward offered."

"And yet I may be away off the track. One thing is certain, the diamonds were stolen and the reward is offered, and if I prove Dona Mariquita innocent I have got to go back and take up the trail anew, unless—"

"What?"

"Well, unless a certain other suspicion proves correct."

Naturally, the reader will want to know why Deadwood Dick, Jr., was placing so much confidence in Cinnabar Jim.

A few words of explanation just here will suffice to make it clear. Cinnabar Jim was one of Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, own kind, who, gaining his reputation, had embarked as a professional sport detective.

Deadwood Dick, Jr., had heard of him as we have seen, but this was his first meeting with him.

"And I will not ask what that other is," assured Cinnabar Jim. "It is your case, not mine; but if we can aid you in any way we are here to do that. I suggest that I give a hint to Wah Lung concerning what is required of him."

"Very well, I take your word for his ability."

They all stopped.

"Boys," explained Cinnabar Jim, "we have joined with Deadwood Dick, Jr., for a piece of work he has on hand, and he sees fit to call us his Big Four."

"Dot means me!" cried Heintz Donnerblitz at once, giving his body a slap with his fist as if it were a big drum. "Maype ve dakes some soothin' syrup on dot, ain't id?"

"Allee samee him mean swill-tub, hittee you pat," chipped in the Celestial. "Meaneet muchee blain, hittee me. You sabe?"

"Ef size goes, I'm thar all right, too," said Purty Pete.

CHAPTER V.

ROYAL GUESTS ARRIVE.

Some minutes were spent in conversation, in which Deadwood Dick outlined to the Chinaman what was expected of him.

Wah Lung had been full of the fever of desire to get on to the other end of the gulch where the banners and streamers of the great circus were floating on the breeze.

There was a broad grin on his homely mug as he listened.

"All right," he acquiesced, when Dick ended, "me go off hot, you bettee! Me findee what you want know, allee samee take all day."

"See to it that you don't idle your time watching the performers in that hoop-la business you were describing to me a while ago," warned Cinnabar Jim, as Wah Lung left them.

"Allee samee me 'tend to biz, you bettee," was called back.

About that time the trill of a bugle was heard.

"Hello!" cried Deadwood Dick, looking around, "what is the meaning of that? It sounds rather military."

"And so it is, too. Look there!"

In at the head of the gulch a detachment of cavalry was seen dashing towards the camp.

In another moment, right after them, appeared a stage coach, drawn by six plumed horses, the lines in the hands of one who, evidently, knew his business well.

"What does it mean?" questioned Cinnabar. "Those soldiers are in parade dress, and not in their rough service blue."

"Ha! I have it, I'll bet a copper! It is the royal party I spoke about."

"Why, you said they were in the City of Mexico, and now you think—"

"It was their intention to take just such a run as this through our Wild West before they returned across the water."

"Then maybe you are right."

On came the cavalry escort, every man erect and with sword at his shoulder, a pretty sight at any time; and after them plunged the stage, like the stage of the good old days.

Dick and his pards had now reached nearly the centre of the camp, and were close by the Metropolitan Hotel.

Here the cavalry halted.

As they came to a stop they divided into equal parties and made a space through which the stage dashed up to the front of the hotel and stopped.

Everybody was on the qui vive.

Several persons were on top of the stage, and others were inside, and as the stage stopped the cavalrymen saluted and one on top of the stage made a response.

Those on top were speedily down, and the door was opened and those within were assisted out.

"Well, was your guess right?" asked Cinnabar of Dick.

"Yes, I hit it exactly. This is the very party, and that handsome young lady is the one who lost the diamonds."

"She was a fool to display them."

"It was a court occasion, you know, or the nearest thing to it to be had in a republic."

"Well, if you are not successful in recovering the gems it will be a dear piece of vanity for her. But, I suppose she can stand it without embarrassment."

"No doubt."

"Who is the chap escorting her?"

"Why, he is her accepted lover, and he is the one who offers the reward."

An officer had entered the hotel to announce the arrival of such important personages, and he now appeared with the proprietor.

After them came the Mayor of the town, "Ornery" Ike Blossom.

He had a "blossom" on his forehead that looked as if he was trying to sprout a horn and change into a unicorn.

The proprietor of the hotel was trying to explain that he had not a room in the house but was taken, that he could not even promise space on the floor in the halls.

The officer was as determinedly insisting that rooms must be had, and the best in the house at that.

"These are royal personages," he urged.

The mayor now shoved to the front.

"What's that yer say?" he demanded. "Royal personages? Then jist interdoose me as ther mayor of Cinnamon Gap, and tell 'em that these hyer doin's is all my own git-up. I'm tickled most ter death to be thus honored."

"I wonder if that pretty spot on his forehead is his own doings, too, eh?" whispered Jim to Deadwood Dick.

"Why, the lunk thinks these people have come here just to honor him."

"I believe he does, really."

"Sure of it; see the airs he is putting on, will you!"

All of which was true. "Ornery" Ike was spreading himself "for all he was worth."

"They will receive you later, sir, if you are Mayor, as you claim," remarked the officer. "They must be housed here, and that at once. Landlord, lead them to your best rooms!"

"But, sir, every room—"

"They will receive me!" blurred "Ornery" Ike, as soon as he could get his

breath for surprise. "Ain't et me receivin' them, I want ter know?"

"Did you understand what I said?" demanded the officer, now severely. "These are royal personages under escort. Do you understand that? Now, the best rooms are wanted immediately!"

It was a painful situation, painful particularly for the royal personages, who were unused to such manifestations of democratic equality.

The officer was equal to the emergency.

He took charge himself and led the way into the hotel, which was a substantial structure of goodly size.

The proprietor of the "shebang" looked after them with an expression of despair on his face, while the mayor glared as if he wanted some one to assure him whether he was awake or dreaming.

"Hully smoke!" he broke out, as the last of the party disappeared. "What is this hyer town of Cinnamon Gap comin' to, anyhow? I used ter think that I owned a slice hyer somers, and that I was boss of ther place; but I ber hanged ef I don't bergin ter doubt et!"

He was glaring around as if to find somebody to explain it so that he could understand it.

The proprietor of the hotel looked dazed.

"Don'dt you see how id vas?" blurted out Donnerblitz. "You vas peen honored py having some plu-plood nobility coom here to your shpiel-fest, ain'dt id? und you should drot ould some soothin' syrup und dreat efrypodies, py shimminy!"

This raised, of course, a roar of laughter, which only made the face of the mayor cloud the more.

"You, is it?" he roared, jerking a pistol from its holster.

"Chulius Schneezier!" cried Heintz, whipping out his miniature Krupp in a twinkling. "Don't you do dot; mein gootness, don't you do dot, mein friendt!"

"That's what's ther matter," put in Purty Pete. "My ponderous pard hyer didn't mean no harm; he is jist as playful as a kitten; but when ye draw a gun on him ye draw et on me too."

"Put id right oop, mister, pud id right oop," advised Heintz.

Seeing that the drop was on him, that was what the mayor did, but it was with ill grace that he complied.

"Haw-haw!" he forced a laugh. "Didn't think that I was goin' to let ye have et, did yer, Dutchy? Haw, haw, haw! Why, ef I had meant biz ye wouldn't had time ter begin ter draw ther thar thing."

"Dot vas all righdt," said Heintz; I vas only blaying, too."

"Me too," echoed Purty Pete.

As for Dick and his new pard, they turned away with a smile.

The Mayor of Cinnamon Gap stormed and vociferated around at a great rate, while the proprietor of the Metropolitan stood helplessly by.

The latter was bewailing his misfortune in thus being deprived of the mastery of his own hostelry, and was speculating as to what he would do when the rooms were demanded by those who had engaged them.

Presently the officer reappeared.

"The party have taken all the rooms on the first floor front," he announced.

"They are liberal payers, landlord, so you have nothing to kick about."

"But, what about the people who had already engaged the rooms, sir?" the proprietor demanded.

"Oh! you will have to fix it with them the best you can."

The officer joined his command.

Deadwood Dick and Cinnabar Jim were waiting for him, and Dick inquired:

"Do you remember me, Col. Coltzer?"
The officer gave him a sharp scrutiny.

"Why, how are you, Bristol?" he cried, extending his hand.

They shook hands warmly.

It was an old acquaintance of Dick's.

"Col. Coltzer, let me introduce my friend, Jim Bradly," Dick said then, presenting Cinnabar Jim.

"Happy to know you, sir," assured the officer, extending his hand to him also. "You two look as if you would make a good team in a fracas, hang me if you don't."

"We would do our little best," said Bradly.

"And there is a favor we would ask of you, Col. Coltzer," Dick then announced. "I believe that you have happened here in the nick of time to save some trouble."

"Is that so? What is it? What is the favor?"

"How long do you think of staying here?"

"Well, all night, no doubt. You see, this party want to see something of our wild Western life as it is, and hearing about these big doings over here at Cinnamom Gap they thought they would like to attend."

"And perhaps they will get all the excitement they want, if that is what they are after. Where will you camp?"

"We have got to look around for a spot."

"Well, now I'll tell you what is wanted: You see that big tent down there, with the white flag? That is a gospel lay-out, in charge of earnest men who have come here for a good purpose, but the mayor of this burg, Ornery Ike he is called, has declared that they shall not remain, and that if their flag isn't down by noon he will demolish their tent and scatter them."

"That would be a fine piece of business, truly."

"So we think, and we—more especially my pard, has promised them that they shall not be molested. You see, however, that we would be but a small handful for a mob; but if you will back us up and camp your men just this side of the tent there will be no trouble."

"Why, I will do that, most assuredly. It is probably the best place to be found in the gulch."

"And you will instruct them concerning the tent and the flag?"

"That I will!"

With that understanding they parted, and Col. Coltzer leaped into the saddle and went with his men to the place selected, while Dick and Cinnabar sauntered off in the direction of the circus tent.

Donnerblitz and Purty Pete were nowhere to be seen at the moment, and it was safe to infer that the Teuton had enticed his "good-looking" companion away in quest of some liquid enthusiasm; or, as Donnerblitz called it, "soothin' syrup."

CHAPTER VI.

A LIVELY LITTLE SET-TO.

All that we have thus far said of Cinnamom Gap, as it appeared on this grand festival occasion, holds good; the only thing is, that we did not say enough.

We have touched the outside, as it were; have mentioned the great circus and its gaudy array of flags; but not a word of the hundred and one little shows that had come into town and set up for the occasion. The main street of the little city was lined with them.

Then there were fakirs of every sort,

every game of chance that can be mentioned, and "sports" and "sharps" galore, both male and female. At one point was a great gaudy merry-go-round, with a wheezy calliope, and at another point was the entrance to a "chute" such as has become a familiar sight at many of our Eastern watering places.

Cinnamon Gap was right up to date, and so widely had this grand occasion been heralded that it had drawn attractions from far and near.

Deadwood Dick, Jr., and Cinnabar Jim commanded attention as they sauntered down the main street in the direction of the circus, taking in the attractions as they went along.

"It has struck me," remarked Dick, as they went along, "to ask you what the business is that has brought you here the same as myself."

"Well, the fact of the matter is, I, too, have a case," Cinnabar Jim acknowledged.

"Big game?"

"Well, rather tall. I am looking for the cashier of a bank who got away with about fifty thousand of the bank's funds."

"That isn't small, sure enough. If I can be of any use to you in the matter, you know you have only got to give me the tip and I will be right on hand. The more the merrier."

"The fellow's name is Howard Carver—at any rate that was his name when he was cashier of the bank."

"Then you have reason to think that was a false name?"

"Yes."

"And you don't know what name he is going under now?"

"No."

"What is your clew?"

"He has got a small crescent-shaped scar on his left cheek, right on the cheek bone."

"And are you looking for that scar?"

"That's it. No telling what name the fellow is hiding under. But, I will have him sooner or later, for he can't keep away from gaming tables."

"And that passion was what brought him to grief, eh?"

"What will bring him to grief when I get hold of him, you bet. That is where the money went."

"Good enough, I will keep an eye out for such a scar, and if I run up against it I will let you know. Say, this town is all alive to-day!"

"Well, I should say so!"

"Have you noticed those hangdog fellows who seem to be following us up quietly? Don't look at once, but do so casually."

"Oh, I am taking them in. I was just going to speak to you about it. They have got their eyes on us for some reason or other, and I have my suspicions concerning them."

"That they are the tools of Ornery Ike?"

"Exactly."

"That is my own idea, too. Well, be ready for them, if they attempt to climb us, and I think there will be a circus here that is not down on the bills."

There were several of the fellows indicated, and they all were about as ill-favored as could have been scared up, and all fully armed.

That they had some understanding was plainly evident from the fact that they cast glances from one to another and seemed to be exchanging signals.

The pard sports keep their eyes on them.

They had now passed the most populous part of the main street, and were approaching the great circus tents.

Of a sudden the hard-looking customers made a rush at two of their companions who had gotten into an altercation and had at last come to blows and were about drawing their guns.

It was all a sham, of course, as Dick and Cinnabar Jim well knew.

The two toughs sparred and wrestled their way across the street directly in front of the sport detectives.

After them came their companions, pell-mell, with knives and revolvers in hand, and their yells created a great excitement on that part of the street.

Dick and Jim made no effort to avoid them.

Just as the two fighters had reached them, they wheeled and attacked the sports with their knives.

At the same moment the rest of the pard crowd tried to close around them, every man of them yelling his loudest.

Crack! crack!

One of Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s guns spoke, followed the same instant by one of Cinnabar Jim's.

The two nearest fellows, those who had been carrying on the sham battle, went down, and the advance of the others was checked instantly.

"Better go easy, now," cautioned Dick, in his cool manner.

"Or you may go easier," added Cinnabar Jim.

Each had a brace of fivers in hand, and back to back they held up the half a score of ruffians.

"Yer have killed our pards!" one big fellow bawled.

"Yas, and they has got ter swing fer et, too, you bet!" howled another.

But all the same they hesitated.

It did not look exactly healthy for them just then, and they saw it.

"Your pard meant to knife us; that was their game and yours with them, as we are well aware," announced Dick. You had better go back and tell Ornery Ike it didn't work."

"What has Ornery Ike got ter do with our 'fairs'?"

"Well, he is mayor of the camp, you know, and he might be interested to know what has been going on,"—said with an irony not to be misunderstood.

"Yas, yer kin jist bet yer hats that he will be interested ter know what has been goin' on hyer!" the biggest of the bravos blurted. "Murder has been goin' on hyer, that's what et is."

He was shouting at the top of his voice, too, to arouse the crowd against the two strangers.

"See here," warned Deadwood Dick in his grim style, lining one of his guns straight at the big fellow's nose, "suppose you and your crew take a walk and take it lively?"

"And what ef we don't?"

"There will be a large time here, you can depend on my word for it."

"And you'll be in it," added Cinnabar. "Come, now, we give you just two seconds to git!"

"Git!" echoed Deadwood Dick, decisively.

"Wull, ef ye mean to murder more of us, we will git, of course," muttered the ringleader of the dozen. "But, you will hear from this hyer, ye can bet ye wull."

"All right; you will probably find us around town somewhere when you get ready for another dose of the same," returned Dick Bristol. "Go back to your mayor with our compliments."

They fell away before the leveled weapons, and Dick and Cinnabar Jim prepared to go on.

But by this time a big crowd had gathered, and everybody was eager to

know what had taken place, what it all meant, and all about it.

"They has murdered two of our pards in cold blood, that is what's ther matter," bellowed the big fellow. "Shot 'em down fer nothin' er tall, jist 'cause they happened to run up erg'inst 'em!"

"That is one side of the story," spoke up Deadwood Dick. "Now hear the other side: These fellows attacked me and my friend in a bunch, and if we hadn't dropped two of them we would have been knifed. It was our lives or theirs, and there they are."

"That's er lie!" bellowed the big tough. "I was hyer and I tell ye et ain't —"

But that was as far as he got.

With a brush of his arms and a leap Dick Bristol confronted the fellow, caught him by the throat and belt, jerked him clear off the ground and lifted him bodily over his head, at the same time shouting:

"Stand from under, everybody!"

And with a mighty display of muscle he hurled the bully far out into the crowd, bowling over three or four of his like with his corporeality.

The astonished crowd sent up a cheer, and the rest of the gang, after such an exhibition had no further argument to offer in support of their charge, and slunk away.

"Any other gentleman want to be obliged?" asked Dick, suavely, as he looked around. "If not, we will go on our way."

Nobody else seemed to hanker for "fun."

"Come on, then, pard," said Dick to Cinnabar Jim, "and perhaps we'll be let alone."

They went on their way.

"Well, I'll be hanged if you don't come up to the assay," declared Cinnabar, as they went along. "I have heard of you, I have read of you, and now I have seen with my own eyes."

Dick smiled.

"And I am inclined to think that I will have a chance to see something of your quality before we get out of this gulch, too," he declared. "We have wakened them up, now, and with that mayor and all his backers against us, we'll have our hands full."

"Well, I'm not going to scare off, are you?"

"You can depend on it that I am going to stand my ground here. We are both here on business, you know."

"By the looks of things, though, private affairs will have to take a back stand till we have washed our hands of public matters. We have got to look out that we don't get it in the neck."

"The only thing to be feared is a cowardly shot from under cover, and we'll have to take our chances of that, I suppose. Well, here is the circus, and by the uproar inside they must be giving something of a preliminary performance. Let's go in and see if we can get sight of our Chinese ally."

They advanced to the main entrance to go in, but a man suddenly planted himself in their way.

CHAPTER VII.

WAH LUNG TAKES A LESSON.

"Hold hard, here!" the man ordered. "Where you fellows goin'?"

"We thought we'd saunter in and see what's on the tapis," answered Deadwood Dick.

"Well, I think ye won't!" asserted the fellow, holding out his arms and blocking the way. "There ain't no performance on; there ain't."

"By the sound of things, one would think you had three rings and that the whole combination was in progress at once," remarked Cinnabar. "What's all the racket about?"

"That's none of your business, see? Git out!"

"Say, don't get crusty, now," admonished Deadwood Dick. "We do not want to run counter to your wishes, but you can be civil about it and use us like gentlemen."

"Gents nothin'! You git right out of here!" and he laid a hand on Dick's shoulder with force.

At that moment a piping voice was heard yelling:

"Hi-yi! You lettee me go, allee samee me be killed! Stoppee horsee, stoppee horsee! Hi-yi! hi-yi!"

"If that ain't Wah Lung's yawp, then I'm a gopher!" cried Cinnabar. "Come on, Richard the Great; I am goin' in here or bust, you bet!"

Dick's first move was against the burly showman. With a deft clip of his left hand he sent him tumbling back against the canvas.

Then he responded to Cinnabar Jim's call and followed him in.

A great crowd was gathered around the big ring in the centre of the tent, composed of the show people and outsiders.

In the ring was a horse, and on the horse was a Chinaman—none other than Wah Lung, Cinnabar Jim's ally, evidently taking his first lesson in equestrianism.

The horse carried a pad half as big as a full-sized mattress, and on the pad, hanging for life, was Wah Lung.

"Stoppee horsee! stoppee horsee!" he was bawling. "Me be killee in no time! Stoppee horsee! stoppee horsee!"

"Hang on, now, you yaller thief!" cried a man in the ring who was playing the role of ringmaster. "We'll teach you not to come peeping around our tents. Are you ready?"

"Hi-yi!" cried Wah Lung. "No makee him go more fastee! Me no can holdee fastee; me get thlowed off, gettee neckee bloke!"

But amid a roar of laughter, the ringmaster gave his whip a snap, and away went the horse at a lively canter, with the Chinee yelling murder!

Wah Lung had a tight hold with both hands on each side of the pad, and every time the horse gave a bound he gave a bounce clear off the pad, and with every bounce he let out a yell that was enough to alarm the camp.

"How do you like it?" cried the man in the ring. "You will sneak around our property tents, will you? Wanted to steal something, perhaps. I guess you will have all the circus you want, after you have pranced around this ring a few times."

"Savee me, savee me!" cried the Chinee. "Me be killee!"

Deadwood Dick and Cinnabar Jim had to laugh at the curious spectacle.

"Shall we chip in and rescue him?" asked Dick.

"No; let him ride it out. It will be a lesson to him to be more cautious in the future."

"All right; just as you say. He is not likely to get hurt, I guess. A Chinaman is tough, and can stand a good deal of hard knocking around. He hangs on for life."

The crowd was laughing boisterously, the ringmaster was making the horse go faster and faster, and presently Wah Lung's hold was broken and he took a header in the sawdust.

"Now, then, take him and heave him out," cried the ringmaster. "I'll bet he never comes around this tent again."

"No, no, make him finish his act!" urged numerous voices.

"That's what's the matter!"

"Set him up again!"

"You want to see more of it, eh?"

"You bet!"

"All right! Catch him and put him on the horse again, and I'll give him a few more turns."

Willing hands laid hold upon Wah Lung and lifted him back to the pad again; the ringmaster cracked his whip and the horse was on its circuitous way as before.

This time Wah Lung got somewhat the better of his tormentors by lying down crosswise and embracing the pad with his arms while his legs dangled.

He was continuing to yell and howl the same as before.

Of a sudden a new voice broke upon their ears in mad vociferations, joined by yet another, and supplemented by still a third.

"Ve don't come in, hey, vas id?" cried a great basso Teuton. "Vell, what you dinks apoudt id now, I reckon?"

"That's what's the matter, what do yer think about et now? Hyer we be, ha'r, hide and hoofs!"

"Let go of me, do you hear? Let go of me, I say, and get out of here quick!"

It was Purty Pete and Heintz Donnerblitz, with the burly cruiser Dick had toppled over at the entrance.

"Yas, ve lets you go," said Donnerblitz, releasing his hold and drawing his modern miniature Krupp; "but id vas you got oudt, und not us, you bet!"

"And ther sooner ther better," warned Purty Pete, he likewise presenting his formidable weapon. "And next time two gents offers ter pay fare like ther gents they be, mebbe you'll take it!"

"Chulious Schneezier! What do mein eyes behold?"

"Et is Wah Lung, as sure as I'm a livin' sinner!"

"Yes, yes, so id vas, so id vas! What you vas trying do, Vah Lung?"

"Aire ye tryin' to larn ter ride, so as ter go on this afternoon an' fling yerself?"

"Stoppee horsee! stoppee horsee!" wailed Wah Lung. "Me gittee sea sich allee samee like when come ovel fiom China!"

"Bet yer blouse we'll stop et!" answered Purty Pete, drawing his gun and leaping over into the ring. "Come on, Dutchy! We'll show 'em how to do ther clown act!"

"You pet your poots! Und den ve dakes some soothin' syrup mit der Chinee, ain't id? Shtop dot horses, now, you fellers mit der whip, or py cracky I lets go mit der trigger dis guns un plow oop der whole peeness!"

"That's what's the matter!"

At sight of these two big pards, both with weapons in hand, the ringmaster stopped the horse and the Chinaman slipped off.

He did not tarry, either, but, taking a dive under the horse's belly, he cleared the ring at a bound and made a break for the rear, amidst a howl of laughter.

"Dot vas righdt, und mooth opliged!" said Heintz to the ringmaster. "You vas von shentlemans, ain't it?"

"Bet yer life he knows a good thing when he sees et," chipped in Purty Pete.

"See here, what was the Chinee to you?" demanded the man with the whip.

"Vhat he peen mit us? He vas our pard, pet your life!"

"Then you want to take care of him, that's all."

"Yaw, yaw; dot vas yust vhat ve peen doing, ain't id?"

This time the laugh was at the ring-

master's expense, and about that time a commanding voice was heard.

It was an order in Spanish for the clearing of the tent of all people not connected with the show, and the employees set about obeying it with vigor.

It was the proprietor himself who spoke.

"Shall we go?" asked Cinnabar of Dick.

"Yes, having seen the Chinaman make off," Dick answered. "No use getting into more trouble with nothing to gain."

"I guess you are right, and besides we'll be wanted up there at the white tent pretty soon."

"Yes, mustn't forget that engagement."

So they went out with the crowd, and as they passed the fellow at the opening he shook his ponderous fist at Dick, saying:

"I won't forget your mug, my friend; I have got an iron in the fire for you."

"All right; just keep it there, will you?" retorted Dick.

"Yes, till I want to use it."

They went on out, and, once clear of the tent, they saw that the space in front was black with people. It looked as if the whole population had come up to that end of the gulch; and in the van was the mayor, "Ornery" Ike.

"Thar they be!" a voice was heard to cry out.

It was the leader of the gang who had tried to lay out Dick and Cinnabar Jim.

"He means us," inferred Cinnabar Jim.

"Not a doubt of that. Well, he will think he has picked up a pair of tarantulas. I guess."

"We'll try to make him think so, anyhow. I have got it in for that lubber, and I had as lief hook up with him now as any time. He has got a big gang at his back, though."

"The more the merrier."

"Hey, thar, you fellers!" the mayor sang out.

"You mean us?" asked Deadwood Dick.

"Bet yer life I mean you!"

"Well, what's wanted?"

"You are wanted, that's what! I arrest ye in the name of the law fer the murder of Silver Dick and Tinker Mike."

"The mischief, you do!" cried Cinnabar Jim, straightening up and giving his head a shake that made his long hair seem like the mane of a lion. "There is evidently a mistake somewhere."

"No mistake about et!" cried the big tough who had led the attack. "I am a witness to et, and that's ten or a dozen more that seen ye do et."

"Nevertheless, there is a mistake."

"Mistake, yer grandmother!" cried the mayor. "Whar kin thar be any mistake?"

"Why, if you give us a fair hearing you will find that a jury will bring in a verdict of suicide without leaving their seats."

"Suicide?"

"Exactly; it was suicide for them to attempt to knife us as they did."

"They didn't 'tempt nothin' of the kind!" bellowed the big rufian. "I was thar an' seen et all. Et was murder!"

"And pity it wasn't you instead of your pards!" said Deadwood Dick. "You carried that message to your mayor, didn't you?"

"Carried nothin'."

"Oh, well, I can tell him myself, then."

"Tell him what?" roared the mayor.

"Why, I sent you my compliments, that was all. When you have dirty work like that done you had better not select such soap boilers."

"Ornery" Ike was livid.

"What do yer mean?" he demanded.

"You know well enough what I mean. Come, now, if you mean business open the ball; we are ready for you."

"Well, that is what I do mean, and straight from ther shoulder, too. I didn't figger on a necktie party fer to-day, but et will help swell ther interest of ther casion. And it will jist fill out ther programme to perfection. Thar is a party of royal people at ther hotel that ar' dyin' to see a wild West town in full bloom, and this hyer will give 'em somethin' to talk about as long as they live. Boys, seize ther prisoners!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A HOT FIGHT AND A VICTORY.

While "Ornery" Ike was shouting the extract quoted above, Cinnabar Jim put his fingers to his lips and whistled.

It was a sharp, ear-splitting note that must have carried a long way, even above all the uproar that was going on, and it had a peculiar sound that was all its own.

That whistle was a signal, and it did not have to be repeated.

There was a commotion in the crowd in the rear of where Cinnabar Jim and Deadwood Dick, Jr., were standing.

Then out of the crowd came Heintz Donnerblitz and Purty Pete, each with his big gun in his fist, and a moment later from another direction came Wah Lung.

So it was, by the time "Ornery" Ike ended his brief harangue, the two men he desired to secure were well supported and it did not look as if it was going to be an easy matter to take them. His men hesitated about obeying the order to seize them.

"Come on, don't be bashful," Deadwood Dick, Jr., invited sarcastically.

"We are waiting for you, you see," added Cinnabar Jim.

"Yaw, yaw, dot vas so," chimed in Heintz Donnerblitz. "Come und see uns, und get a pellyful mit pullets, ain't id?"

"Bet yer life that's it!" cried Purty Pete. "I'm fairly spiling fer a ruction, and this hyer looks just about my size. Come on, you ornery varmints, and git yer medicine!"

"We have to get out of here," whispered Cinnabar Jim to Dick, while the Dutchman and Pete were shouting.

"Yes, you are right, for they are too many for us."

"But, how?"

"Form a wedge and charge 'em."

"All right, I'm ready for anything. We don't want to be taken prisoners."

"Not a bit of it."

Cinnabar Jim then said a word to each of his followers, and Deadwood Dick, Jr., cried:

"Now, Big Four, follow me, and stop for nothing! Bowl over anything that gets in your way, from a mayor to a mule!"

The mayor and all his minions had their weapons in hand, but they were powerless to use them in a crowd like that, composed as it was partly of women and children.

As Dick ended he made the dash.

Cinnabar Jim was right at his side, and they clubbed their revolvers.

In the centre rear came the Chinaman, and Heintz Donnerblitz and Purty Pete flanked him on each side.

"Ornery" Ike and his band might just as well have tried to stop a thunderbolt as to stop such a combination.

Deadwood Dick, Jr., and Cinnabar Jim dealt blows right and left as they dashed, and Heintz Donnerblitz and Purty Pete took care of the right and left wings.

It might be inferred that the Chinese had nothing to do, and was playing the part of the poltroon.

Far from it.

He had his back braced to those in front, and presented a brace of revolvers to guard the rear.

"Allee samee keepee off!" he cried. "No comee gum game, else gittee head blow clean off, you bettee! Sockee to 'em Heintz and Pete; me heap bettee on you!"

The ponderous Dutchman and his homely ally kept up a rapid play with their tongues as they did with their fists, but Deadwood Dick, Jr., and Cinnabar Jim observed grim silence as they fought their way through that fierce throng.

Two or three times where an attempt was made to use a knife upon them, they dashed the butts of their weapons into the face of the man with crushing effect.

On others they were more lenient, and sought only to open a passage through.

At last their object was gained.

They broke through and with a yell dashed away up the main street, leaving many a sore head in their wake.

But the end was not yet.

After them came "Ornery" Ike and his horde of followers.

"This thing is going to be serious before we get done with it," said Cinnabar Jim, as they ran.

"It will be serious for the boss of this burg if he keeps it up," grimly declared Deadwood Dick, Jr.

"I fancy this is the same gang he meant to attack the gospel tent with as soon as he had disposed of us to his liking."

"Not a doubt of it, and as it is about noon now we have got business up in that direction. Come on, while we are about it!"

"Yes, for there is safety for us, anyhow. Not that I care a continental; I had as lief stop right here and face them again, if you say so; but if we get hurt here we can't do any good there."

"Our place is there, just now," said Dick.

So, on they ran, while the whooping and yelling mob pursued them up the street.

They all had their weapons in hand, and as people rushed out to see what was going on they just so much hindered the mob in pursuit.

In front of the Metropolitan the crowd became dense about as soon as Deadwood Dick, Jr., and his Big Four had passed that point, and the fugitives were given a breathing spell.

They lost no time in reaching the place where the gospel tent stood, and where the soldiers were encamped.

Dick hurriedly made known the situation.

There was a call of the bugle, not very loud, but loud enough for all to hear it.

In a trice the horses were ready, and every man stood ready to leap into the saddle at the word of command, Col. Coltzer himself in charge.

On came the Mayor of Cinnamon Gap, closely followed by his yelling henchmen, straight on and up before the entrance to the gospel tent, where they came to a stop.

Deadwood Dick, Jr., and Cinnabar Jim were nowhere to be seen, at the moment, neither the others of the Big Four.

"Whur's them 'ar galoots—them 'ar murderers?" called out "Ornery" Ike.

The cavalrymen were standing near with their horses.

"What murderers?" asked Col. Coltzer.

"Why, thét thar long-haired feller and

his pard that kem up this hyer way, with a Dutchman, a Chinee, and another galoot."

"I guess they went inside," said the Colonel.

"Like the cowards they aire! Wull, that won't save 'em, not by a good deal, et won't. This hyer tent is comin' down, and et is comin' down now. D'y'e hear what I say, you gospel perfessors?"

He bellowed loudly enough for the whole gulch to hear.

"What will you tear down the tent for?" asked Col. Coltzer, as if he had heard nothing about it.

"I'll tell ye what fer. I warned these hyer white-livered hypocrites to git up and git out of this hyer gulch, and they hain't done et, that's what fur. I told 'em of that thar flag wasn't down by noon I'd haul it down, and et is noon."

"Then you mean to pull the flag down, do you?"

"Wull, you kin bet that I do! Hillo! in thar, preacher!"

The manager of the salvation corps made his appearance at the door of the tent.

"What did I tell you about that thar flag?" cried "Ornery" Ike. "Et is noon, now, and ther flag ain't down yet. Do yer mean to defy me—me ther mayor of ther town?"

"That flag cannot come down, sir. I would be a coward, one unworthy of the cause—"

"Oh! that be durn. I give ye one minute to pull ther rag down!"

"I will not do it, sir."

"Whur-rr-rrr! Do yer mean to defy me? Yer won't do et? Wull, then I will do et fur ye, and that mighty suddent, you bet!"

With that, "Ornery" Ike bounced out of the saddle and made a dash for the tent entrance, with a pistol in hand, with the good intention of pulling the flag down.

"My brother, I warn you, desist," said the preacher, holding up his hands, palms outward.

"Don't yer brother me, durn yer!"

"You will come to grief—"

"Wough!" With that snarl, the terrible fellow made a leap at the preacher, who stepped aside, and the next instant "Ornery" Ike passed the opening.

The same instant that he did so he was seized, and held fairly as if he had been but a child.

He was in the hands of Deadwood Dick, Jr., and Cinnabar Jim.

"Let me go!" he shouted ferociously.

"Yes, when you have promised to carry yourself more like a man," said Deadwood Dick, Jr.

"Yer will let me go anyhow, cuss yer! Charge ther tent, boys! Tear et into a thousand threads and fling et to ther four winds of ther yearth!"

There was a quiet signal from the colonel of the cavalry.

His men were instantly in their saddles, and with a sudden dash they were in line before the door of the tent.

Each man had a formidable-looking, short-barreled repeating rifle in his right hand, and they could have played havoc with a bigger mob than that, had occasion necessitated.

Needless to say, there was no charge.

Deadwood Dick, Jr., and Cinnabar Jim now led their prisoner out of the tent.

"Now," said Dick, "I take it that you are a man of horse sense, even if you are the 'orneriest cuss in seventeen countries.'"

"Wull, what of et?" snarled Mr. Blossom.

"I just want to call your attention to

the fact that this tent is protected, that is all, and warn you not to try to molest it. If you do, somebody is going to get hurt."

"And it is just barely possible that that somebody will be you," added Cinnabar Jim.

"But, durn 'em, they ain't got no right hyer!"

"They are outside the town limits."

"But, I own ther ground!"

"They will pay you ten dollars a day for the use of it," spoke up Deadwood Dick, Jr.

"I want a hundred dollars a day, or et ain't no deal."

"Very well, here is your price," Cinnabar Jim snapped him up. "I will pay you for ten days, and if they do not remain that long here, you are to refund the balance to the proprietor of the tent."

"That's all I wanted, some 'pensation fer ther priv'lege," muttered the mayor, seeing an easy way out of his dilemma. "Give me ther dudads, and they kin stay hyer."

"Here you are, then. Wait, and we will have a receipt with the conditions stated therein. Col. Coltzer, you witness this bargain."

"Yes, sir; I will defend it, too."

A little table was brought out from the tent, together with paper, pen, and ink, and also a chair, and Cinnabar Jim sat down and wrote out such a receipt.

"Now," he said to "Ornery" Ike, rising, "you sit down there and sign that paper, and here is your thousand."

The mayor promptly complied.

"And now," said Cinnabar Jim, as he handed him the money, "if there is any more trouble with you in this direction your funeral will be likely to follow, so take warning."

"Thar won't be no more trouble hyer," promised Mr. Blossom, as he tucked his money away in a pocket. "A bargain is a bargain, wi' me, and this hyer is a bargain. But this don't end ther matter 'tween you and me p'son'ly. You look out er 'Ornery' Ike Blossom!"

CHAPTER IX.

DICK SIGHTS JIM'S MAN.

Mr. Blossom was allowed to depart. Col. Coltzer gave him an additional word of warning as he went.

"Well, that insures the safety of your gospel proteges, I guess," remarked Deadwood Dick, Jr.

"Not half so much as the presence of this cavalry detachment does," responded the yellow-haired sport. "But now they have got a legal right to remain, and can insist upon it."

"For which we heartily thank you, sir," said the manager of the tent.

"Don't mention it," said Cinnabar Jim. "If you remain here only four or five days you will have a neat balance coming to you, and you may consider that as my donation to your cause—No, no, I'm a sinner, no saint; but I had a mother who was one."

Cinnabar Jim turned and strolled away, and Deadwood Dick, Jr., and the other members of the Big Four followed.

Deadwood Dick, Jr., looked upon his new pard with a feeling of pride.

Here was a lion with a woman's heart-tenderness.

Or was it a womanly nature with a lion's heart? No matter, the redoubtable Richard already loved the man.

"Well, where to now, pard Cinnabar?" he asked, as he came up with him. "There is one matter disposed of, and a pile of credit checked to your score."

"Don't bring that up any more, please," said the yellow-haired sport, modestly.

"As to where to—if you feel like I do, I think your stomach will answer the question for you. I propose a feed."

"That's just what's the matter with me, and I didn't know it," declared Dick. "Come on, and we'll clean out the first feed trough we come to."

"Dot's what's der matter mit me, too," cried Donnerblitz. "I vas as hungry as two pears und a cub!"

"Allee samee me too," chimed in Wah Lung. "Belly belly much empty."

"And don't fergit that I'm hyer," reminded Purty Pete.

"By the way, Wah Lung, what did you learn at the circus tent?" Deadwood Dick, Jr., inquired.

"Yaw, yaw, yaw!" Heintz Donnerblitz suddenly broke out. "Didn't he learn to ride horsepack yust beautifully? Chulius Schneizer! I vas proud of you, Wah Lung!"

"Allee samee Wah Lung know what about," said the Celestial, with a grin.

"Bet yer life!" cried Purty Pete.

"But that wasn't what I meant," said Dick. "I meant what did you get in the way of information?"

"No gottee heap much, allee samee gottee some," was the response.

"Well, what did you get?"

"Me gitte caught too quickee, no hear all, but hear something. Was in tent of pleddy lady, when dark man comee in. Him say Dona Juana and Don Hunfredo, ome to town. Pleddy lady she gave a start. Him say Dona Juna and Don Hunfredo find out 'bout sparklers. Then findee me, calleee man, have me kickee out—mucheet grand bounce!"

The Dutchman and Purty Pete laughed heartily, but Dick and Cinnabar Jim gave serious attention.

"That seems to support your suspicion," remarked the yellow-haired sport.

"Yes, you're right," agreed Dick. "I am on the right scent."

"Who is this Don Hunfredo?"

"He is the lord this Dona Juana is to wed."

"And they are the royal party that came here under escort—By the Lord Harry! but your game promises big."

"Yes, it certainly does. I shall pay some attention to his Spanish lordship, after we have stuffed our stomachs to a comfortable degree. Here, how will this place do?"

They had by this time regained the business part of the town, and as Dick spoke he stopped before a rather tempting restaurant.

"Just the place," said Cinnabar Jim.

It was in a modern sort of building, with two show windows.

In the windows various viands were temptingly arrayed and displayed, and on the broad plate glass of each window was the sign in white enamel lettering:

"Ladies and Gents' Grub Parlor."

And inside, hanging by a string and in convenient position for reading, was this hand-printed placard:

1 Snack, 2-bits.

1 Square Meal, 50c.

1 Mortal Gorge, \$1.

Deadwood Dick, Jr., and Cinnabar Jim smiled as they read.

"Which will you take?" asked Dick.

"I think a square meal will do for me," answered the yellow-haired sport.

"Provided it is square, eh?"

"Sure."

"And how about the rest?"

"Well, square meals will do, except Heintz; we'll let him go the limit."

"Yaw, yaw, dot vas me," approved the Teuton. "Und don't forget dot I dakes peer mit my grub, Cinnapar Chim."

"No, no, I won't forget your soothin' syrup," the sport assured.

They walked in.

The place seemed to be doing a rushing business, for every table was filled at the moment.

While they looked around, however, two tables near the rear of the room were vacated at the same time, and our friends advanced and took possession.

"Let's put 'em together and make one table," suggested Dick.

"All right, catch hold," agreed Cinnabar.

This was quickly done, and they all sat down around it, the big Teuton completely filling one side.

A waiter soon presented himself.

He saw what had been done with the tables, but after a glance at the party he concluded not to say anything.

"What will you have?" he asked.

"Four square meals and a mortal gorge," answered Deadwood Dick, Jr. lest it might be forgotten.

"And don't forgot dot soothin' syrup," reminded Heintz Donnerblitz.

"Soothing syrup?" repeated the waiter, amazed.

"Yaw, yaw, dot vas righdt."

"Why, you are no baby!"

"Make it beer," Deadwood Dick, Jr., interpreted, laughing. "Make it a pailful while you are about it."

The waiter laughed and went away to fill the order, and Deadwood Dick, Jr., and his Big Four looked around the room at the other customers while they waited for their dinner.

Of a sudden something caught Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, eye.

He gave no start, neither did he let it be seen that his notice was attracted.

At another table not far away sat a man with a small crescent-shaped scar just over the cheek bone of his left cheek.

He was a thin, nervous fellow, with a hunted look in his eyes, but he was flashily dressed and sported diamonds on his shirt bosom and on the fingers of his left hand.

Presently Dick leaned over toward Cinnabar Jim.

"Don't move a muscle," he said in low tone, "but I have spotted your man Carver."

"Is that so?" without moving.

"Yes, if the scar you mentioned counts for anything. He has got it all right."

"What does he look like?"

Dick gave a brief description.

"That is the chap," declared Cinnabar Jim, positively. "I will keep my eye on him and see what I can pick up in the way of proofs against him at the same time."

"Then you don't want him now?"

"I want my dinner worse. I'll ask the waiter about him when he comes with our fodder."

All right, but take care the lunk don't stare at the man and so put him on his guard. Some men don't know enough to last them over night, in that respect."

Presently the waiter came, his arms about as full as they would hold, and an assistant almost as heavily laden.

When the things had been put on the table Cinnabar Jim slipped a gold half-eagle into the fellow's hand, saying as he did so:

"That is for yourself, and I want you to earn it."

One glance at the coin was enough.

"Say what you want," he said tersely.

"Who is that man in black near the door?"

Up popped the fellow's head to look, and Deadwood Dick, Jr., smiled.

"I don't know, sir," the waiter answered.

"No, I don't suppose you do, and he is not the man I wanted to ask you about. Now this time don't look up at all, but pretend we are talking about this lay-out; see?"

"Yes, I see, sir," and the waiter reddened.

"Well, now, don't look up, and don't look his way as soon as you do raise your head, either. Take your time about it, and stop here presently and tell me. I mean the man a couple of tables behind me, the fellow with the scar on his cheek."

"Oh! him? I can tell you who he is without lookin'."

"Who is he?"

"He is known here as Roulette Joe."

"Good enough. Now don't look at him at all, but stop here again in a few minutes."

"All right."

The fellow went on about his duties.

"Not by any means a fool, after you got him on his guard," remarked Deadwood Dick, Jr.

"As good as the average," agreed Cinnabar Jim. "When he stops again I'll find out more about him—get the second chapter of the story as it were."

Presently the waiter brought the bill for the party, and bent low as he laid it on the table.

"Where does this Roulette Joe usually hang out?" inquired Cinnabar.

"He runs a game in the Redlight Saloon."

"Been here very long?"

"About a year, I guess."

"All right, that will do. Now remember your tip and keep mum."

"No need to caution me about that, sir. And if there is anything more you want to know, just ask."

The waiter went his way, then, and Deadwood Dick, Jr., and his Big Four continued their dinner in comparative silence, being too busy to talk—especially the Dutchman, whose "mortal gorge" was sufficient for two ordinary men.

While the others were waiting for Heintz to finish, "Roulette Joe" got up and passed out of the room, and when Cinnabar Jim got a look at him he nodded his head approvingly and informed Dick that he had made no mistake. This fellow was Howard Carver, the defaulter.

CHAPTER X.

DICK GETS HIS CINCH.

About the time when Deadwood Dick, Jr., and his Big Four left the restaurant, there was a monster parade on the tapis.

The band wagon belonging to the circus was coming up the street, and behind it came the other vehicles belonging to the show, in all the glory of gilt and glare.

Nor was this all.

In view of the fact that it was the camp's own holiday, and the additional fact that they had titled visitors in town, the mayor had ordered that the parade should be enlarged by incorporating with it everything the camp could turn out in the way of hoofs and wheels.

And so they were coming, with blare of brass and "bellow of bazoo."

"This is a large time," observed Deadwood Dick, Jr.

"Life size, you bet," agreed the yellow-haired sport.

"Well, what's first in order?"

"I believe that I will hunt up my man Carver and pipe him a little, while the band plays on."

"And while you are doing that, I will go to the hotel and pay my respects to the Dona Juana, I believe. She will want to hear from me regarding the necklace."

"Uud what apoudt us?" asked Heintz Donnerblitz.

"Oh, you will want to go off somewhere and sleep while you digest that mortal gorge you have just got away with," laughed Cinnabar.

"Nit! I feel like peesness, now, und if you have got any more fight on hand, you yust call out der reserve und see if ve don't clean out der houses; ain't dot right, Burty Bete?"

"Yer kin bet yer life it is right, Dutchey!"

"Allee samee no wantee me, me go to show and see lady lide horse and jump thlough hoop," declared Wah Lung. "Hoop-la! Muchee kickee up heels, have big time. Go lound ling with legge stickee out, so; and thlow kissee to Wah Lung like this."

Again did Wah Lung dance on one foot while he allowed his imagination to carry him away, moving his arms up and down and flapping his big sleeves, holding one foot out and ending by blowing kisses from the tips of his fingers to an imaginary audience, while the others laughed heartily at his antics.

"That is ther way you didn't do et," said Purty Pete, when he had done

Wah Lung seemed to have forgotten his own experience.

"Well, go and enjoy yourselves," said Cinnabar Jim, "and we'll all meet here for supper at about the proper time."

"But before we part with them," said Dick, "we ought to have an understanding respecting a signal that will call one or all of them to the assistance of either of us, if needed."

"I have such a signal—you heard it at the tilne we had the hook-up with "Ornery" Ike and his gang there at the circus tent. If you can imitate that signal pretty closely, you can call them to your aid any time if they are wicin hearing."

"All right, I will try it, if need arises."

"And the same will answer for us as well."

"Yes. So-long for the present."

Thus they separated, and Deadwood Dick, Jr., went to the Metropolitan Hotel while Cinnabar Jim sauntered away in quest of the Redlight Saloon.

The band wagon had now passes, and the parade was in progress. It looked as if the whole population of the gulch was in line, but still the sidewalks were well lined with people.

When Dick reached the hotel he found the royal party on the piazza, in company with Col. Coltzer.

The latter greeted Dick cordially.

The Dona Juana looked up, and seeing who it was, smiled sweetly and held out her hand.

Her companion, a dark visaged young man, looked at Dick with no pleased expression at first, but the next moment he too held out his hand in greeting.

Dick had made their acquaintance in Mexico.

"Then you are acquainted?" cried Col. Coltzer, in some surprise.

"Oh, yes," said Dick, and he accepted a seat the lady motioned him to.

There were more of the party than the two we have named, but we need not give the names.

"You are enjoying the parade, I find," said Dick, in his best Spanish, for their knowledge of English was more limited than was his of Spanish.

"Yes, we are seeing everything to be seen," the young lady responded. "That was what we came through your West for, to see and learn, for we have heard so much about it."

"But this is an unusual occasion," Dick reminded.

"That was what enticed us here, sir. We believed that we could be able to see much at once. I find the same circus is here that we had the pleasure of seeing in Mexico."

"And the misfortune," added Dick.

"Ah! you remind me. You have not recovered the necklace?"

"I have not been able to do so yet," Dick announced. "I begin to fear it is lost irrecoverably."

Don Hunfredo was paying close attention.

"I feared so from the first," he said. "I suppose it would be of no use, sir, for me to double the reward?"

"Not the slightest," Dick assured. "I am doing my best, and could do no more than that, no matter what the amount of the reward. It must be that I have started on the wrong track."

"Ah! then you think the circus people innocent?"

There was a look of relief on the Spaniard's face, and a tinge of satisfaction in his tone.

"I have been unable to prove them guilty, thus far. I have followed them up pretty closely, but not a sign of the diamond necklace do I find yet."

"Then it might as well be given up."

"Perhaps."

"Not that I would have you give it up," Don Hunfredo hastened to add. "The reward is still offered; find the gems if you possibly can."

"It is not so much their value," said the lady, with more or less pretended unconcern, "but they are dear to me because of their association. They are family jewels, you know, sir."

"I understand," said Dick. "I only regret that I have not been able to find them. Not so much for the sake of the reward, as the honor of returning them to your ladyship."

For that she gave him a grateful smile.

Dick remained with the party for some time, or until the parade returned and the crowd began to drift toward the circus tent.

At length he took leave.

Going around the block on which the hotel stood, he came back to a point where he could observe the main entrance without being discovered unless one looked for him searchingly.

After a while Don Hunfredo came out alone and hastened down the street in the direction of the circus.

"Ha! I thought so," Dick said to himself. "If you are not in it, my gentleman, I miss my guess."

He followed his suspect, keeping him in sight.

Don Hunfredo went straight to the big tent, but did not immediately enter.

Instead, he acted as if waiting for some one, and presently he was rewarded, for Don Gilfranco, as the proprietor was called, came forth and looked around.

Don Hunfredo went forward to him, and they shook hands.

By that time Deadwood Dick was near them, near enough to hear what they said.

"I am glad to see you," was Don Gilfranco's greeting. "I have been expecting you to turn up somewhere before this."

"It could not be done, you know. I had to make haste slowly, in order not to awaken suspicion. And how about the—*the unmentionable?* Is it all right and secure?"

"It is too secure, Don Hunfredo."

"What mean you?"

"The Dona Mariquita refuses to surrender it."

"Not even for the price agreed upon?"

"Not even for that. She seems to think they are worth much more than that, and

she has all a woman's liking for pretty things, you see."

"But, zounds! she must be made to give them up."

"How will you go about it?"

"Force her to surrender them!"

"And have her expose our pretty plot,

eh? You will see that she has the whip over us, if you look closely."

"Diablo! But, we have got to have them, I tell you. I have about reached the end of my rope, and the return from these diamonds will no more than tide me over until I get my fingers into my lady's fortune."

"And I am as eager for my share of them as you are for yours, but you see how it is."

"By heavens! I believe that it is a plan to cheat me out of them altogether. If not, you could have taken them from her long ago."

"Could I? You do not seem to know Dona Mariquita very well."

"You could have stolen them."

"And she carrying them on her person constantly, and armed with pistol and dagger."

"I must see her. Take me to her, and together we must wrest them out of her possession. I tell you everything depends on my getting those gems."

"You cannot see her till after the performance; it would unnerve her, and she would be no good for her act. Come around after the performance is over, and we'll pay her a visit."

"You are afraid of her!"

"She is a tigress."

"Well, I will be around, but mark you this: Those diamonds have got to come into my possession, or the worse for you and her!"

"Threats will do you no good, Don Hunfredo. I am as eager as you to get hold of them, but she has got us both in a tight place and we dare not make any great disturbance."

CHAPTER XI.

FOUND AND LOST.

Noting that they had stopped to talk close by the canvas, on the outside, in the angle where the entrance-way joined the main body of the tent, Deadwood Dick, Jr., had slipped behind a flap so close to them that he almost touched them.

Not a word was lost, and presently, when they parted company, he came out without having been discovered.

There was one thing he wanted to be sure about.

If those diamonds were on the person of Dona Mariquita, constantly, all he would have to do, in order to gain possession of them, would be to arrest her and take them.

Going around to the rear, he went nosing about among the smaller tents as if merely sight-seeing.

Two or three times some of the circus attaches saw him and appeared on the point of challenging him, but a glance from those magnetic black eyes of his made them hesitate about doing so.

At last he found himself between two canvas partitions, on one side of which numerous men's voices were heard.

Finding a slight rip, he peered within.

A number of male performers were donning their tights preparatory to making their appearance in the ring.

No sound came from the other side, but Dick had reason to believe that a similar apartment for the women connected with the show was there, and there his interest lay.

This canvas appeared to be newer and better than the other, and there was no hole to be found handy.

Drawing his knife, he used the point of it and made one.

He peered in, and what he saw confirmed his suspicion. This tent was partitioned off with curtains, and in the compartment into which he was looking was Dona Mariquita.

She was just putting the finishing touches to her arena toilet.

Dick looked well around, but there was no sign anywhere of a diamond necklace.

She certainly had none on her neck, and just now her attire was so meagre that there was scant space anywhere for its concealment on her person.

Dick resolved to wait where he was and enter that tent while the performance was going on, come what might of it, and make a search among her effects. If caught— Well, he felt no concern.

While he still watched, however, he saw the woman take up one of her shoes and pull out the stocking she had thrust into it when undressing.

Then thrusting a finger down into the front of her low bodice she drew out something that caused Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, eyes to sparkle—something that had the appearance of great solid drops of water.

It was the necklace.

With a look around, to be sure that no one was observing her, she let the diamonds slip into the stocking she held and hurriedly folded the stocking and thrust it into the shoe.

This done, she put the shoes on the ground under the chair with which her apartment was furnished, and on which hung her usual wearing apparel.

This chair was not more than a yard from where Dick was standing.

Dick remained where he was, and with all the silence of a statue. He had now a purpose in view.

He took care that his person was making no indentation that would reveal his presence to the occupants of either of the dressing rooms.

It seemed as if the show would never begin, and when it had opened, as if it would never come Dona Mariquita's turn to go on; but at last even that came around, and the coast was clear.

Both tents were for the moment empty, but there was no assurance how long they would be so, hence the necessity for haste.

Dropping down, Dick cut a slit in the canvas near the ground.

That done, he lay down and thrust in his arm to secure the shoe from under the chair.

It was a long reach, and he was just pressing the canvas hard to reach yet further when a strong hand seized his wrist and a blow was dealt him on the arm, almost hard enough to break it.

For the moment it seemed to paralyze the member, and he could make no use of it, despite the necessity for prompt action.

There was a heavy pressure for a moment.

With his other hand, Dick managed to get hold of a gun in a few seconds, and he thrust that through the opening.

Instantly he was released, he heard a quick step, and pulling out his arms as quickly as he could he looked through the hole he had made, but the apartment was tenantless.

Whoever it had been, that person was gone.

The shoes were there, apparently precisely as the woman had left them, and reaching in again, this time looking, Dick drew out the one into which he had seen her put the necklace.

With eager haste he drew out the stocking, but the diamonds were not in it.

"Thunder!" Dick ejaculated. "The other fellow got 'em."

And who was he?

That was a question that puzzled the redoubtable Richard just then, one that he could not answer.

He had not the slightest clew, save that it had been a man, as he judged by the amount of strength shown by the hand that had grabbed his wrist.

There was no help for it; the diamonds were gone.

If he could not recover them and restore them to their owner, which he did not by any means despair of doing, yet he could show to Dona Juana the perfidy of Don Hunfredo.

And he would, too.

In fact, he half suspected that the Don was the one who had stolen the necklace this second time.

"Ouch! but my arm feels the effect of that blow," Dick said to himself. "A little harder, and I would have been a subject for a plaster sleeve for a month or so."

There was no use his remaining longer there, so he made his way out with cautious haste.

When he reached the open ground no suspicious person was in sight.

He sauntered idly as before, and presently found himself near the entrance where his burly opponent of the morning was taking tickets.

Without bothering to go to the ticket wagon, Dick drew a silver dollar from his pocket and tendered it to the man, with the remark that he could treat himself with it when he had time and forgot the unpleasantness of the forenoon.

The fellow had no objection to the arrangement, and Dick walked in.

The tent was packed.

Dona Mariquita was doing her bareback act, a performance that was meeting with much applause.

Deadwood Dick, Jr., sauntered around the edge of the circle of humanity, not so much looking for a seat as he was for a sight of Don Gilfrano.

Then it occurred to him that he was not likely to find the proprietor of the circus in the audience, so he went on around to where the band was playing and took a standing position near the exit.

He was in nobody's way, and of course nobody interfered with him.

Dona Mariquita was an excellent equestrienne, performing some of the most daring feats with ease and grace, and the applause was constant.

"Hi-yi! Heap muchee bully!" Dick presently heard a familiar voice cry out. "You beatee band, you bettee! Hoop-la! Let go Gallagee! You muchee fine gal; me likee you!"

Looking around Dick beheld Wah Lung on the very top row of seats, clapping his hands and making a great racket, evidently greatly delighted.

Dick smiled at this display of enthusiasm, and presently sauntered over near the line of reserved seats.

He wanted to make sure whether Don Hunfredo was there or not, or any of the royal party, and was soon satisfied that none was there, so he passed on around the circle and out, proceeding straight to the Metropolitan.

There he found that Don Hunfredo had returned, and discovered him in the bar-room.

Dick pretended not to see him, but crossed the room and took up a paper, and lighting a cigar, became interested in reading.

Within half an hour the Don went out. Dick glanced after him, and saw him start in the direction of the circus.

This was what the detective had been waiting for, and he sent a brief note up to the Dona Juana, requesting an audience with her immediately.

She came down to the general room, and he went in.

"You desire to see me?" she asked at once. "Have you, then, discovered something?"

"Yes, I have discovered something," Dick responded. "At the same time it is something that I do not want to tell you, but want you to hear for yourself."

"Why, you surprise me."

"You will be more surprised. Will you come with me to the circus?"

"Gracias! This is a strange request. However, I trust you and will go; but of course Don Hunfredo may accompany—"

"Not so. Besides, he is already there."

"He is there?"

"Yes. You may trust me fully; you will not regret going."

"Then my chaperone—"

"You must come alone or not at all. Put on some garment in which you will not be easily recognized, and a shawl over your head."

"It is so strange; I hardly dare—"

"Your life's happiness may depend on it. Stay, you have full confidence in Col. Coltzer?"

"Ah! yes, the fullest."

"Then I will request him to come with us, and you will then certainly feel secure—"

"No, no, do not do that! It would be to insult you, sir. If I have confidence in him, so have I confidence in you—you who were introduced to me by the President of the Mexican Republic personally. I will prove it."

"And my word of honor on it, you will return here in safety within the hour, and you will ever bless the day and hour."

"You bewilder me, sir. Wait a few minutes; I will be ready."

She left the room and Dick paced the floor.

While he waited he looked well to his weapons, to make sure they would respond if needed.

In a few minutes she returned, and had Dick met her on the street he would never have taken her to be the Dona Juana of royal lineage.

She had borrowed a dress from one of her maids, a shawl from another, and she looked not unlike many another young woman in town that day, in gala attire. She would not be recognized.

"I am ready," she said simply.

"Then we will go," said Dick. "Partly conceal your face with your shawl, and no one will ever know you."

This she did, and they left the hotel and turned their steps in the direction of the circus tent with its many gay flags and streamers, the lady taking Dick's arm.

"I am eager to know what this great secret can be," she remarked.

"And I am none the less eager to have you know it," Dick responded. "It is one you would never believe, from my lips."

Dick glanced at her face as he said this, the little of it that was to be seen, and noted that she paled slightly, and at the same time he felt her grip tighten on his arm.

He was trying to prepare her mind in some measure for what was soon to be revealed to her, if he could bring it about.

CHAPTER XII.

JIM DRAWS TO FILL

Cinnabar Jim, too, demands a share of our attention.

When we took leave of him it was his

intention to pay a visit to the Redlight Saloon.

He sauntered along while the parade was passing, and finally made some inquiry concerning the destination he had in mind.

Everybody knew the "Redlight," and it was no trouble to find it.

He sauntered leisurely in, took a seat at a table, and called for wine and cigars.

There were women around the room, and in order to make his presence there less likely to draw notice, he invited one of these to sit down at his table.

She complied readily enough, and they fell into an idle chat.

The woman was rather good looking, at least half Mexican, to judge by her complexion and dress, and they made an attractive pair.

She seemed to take rather a liking to the good-looking yellow-haired sport, and presently she said:

"You are one of the men who were in the fight this morning, are you not?"

"Well, I was in a little brush with some ruffians here, if that is what you mean," answered Cinnabar.

"That is what I mean, and as I rather take a fancy to you I think I can tell you something that you would like to know."

"I will make it worth your while," said the detective sport. "Here, just put this in your pocket as a retainer, and believe me when I say I think you are honest with me."

He reached across the narrow table and pressed a double eagle in her palm.

She gave a start, and a look of delight.

"I am yours truly now, anyhow," she declared. "I knew at sight that you were a true-blood sport, not one of the make-believe kind."

"And I knew at sight that you were a girl worth talking with," returned Cinnabar. "We understand and trust each other now, so go ahead and tell me what it is I ought to know."

"I will, and straight, too. There is a scheme on foot to silence you and your pards before this day is done."

"I am not surprised at that."

"And if it does not happen before night, you are likely to be murdered, then, every one of you."

"Still I am not surprised, as far as the intention of the worthy mayor of this camp is concerned. If he carries out his plans, however, I shall then be surprised."

"Why, you will be dead."

"And that will be cause enough for surprise, won't it? Only the good and beautiful die young, you know."

"Then my chances for old age are excellent—"

"Hold on, you are far from being out of danger. But, that isn't to the point. Go on with what you were telling me."

"The mayor, Ornery Ike, is at the bottom of it, as you have guessed. He has got his willing cutthroats out after you, and they are only waiting for a chance to do you."

"There is no news in that; we know it, or suspect it, and have our eyes peeled accordingly."

"And it will pay you to keep them peeled, too."

"By the way, do you know a fellow called Roulette Joe?" Cinnabar Jim inquired.

He noted that the woman gave a start.

"Yes, I know him," she said.

"A friend of yours?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"Because I would like an introduction to him, that's all."

"Well, yes, he is a friend of mine; I can introduce you when he happens in, if you wish it."

"Very well, I will hold you to your bargain."

"But look here, what do you want to know him for? What is your game with him?"

"Now, that is something that I cannot tell you until I know you a little better," said Cinnabar. "Almost every man has private matters that he cannot reveal to everybody."

"Oh, well, if you can't trust me—"

"See here, would you be willing to trust your life to my keeping, unknown to you as I am?"

"Yes, I would. Your face is enough for me. I would trust you to the last limit, for I believe that your heart is as big as a tub and that you are as true as gold."

"Well, that is a good opinion of me, anyhow. I'm going to see whether you mean all that or not."

"How are you going to do that?"

"By putting it to the test. Now, if you believe in me as you say, tell me your life story—"

She gave another start at that.

"You see how it is," said the yellow-haired sport. "Every heart has its own secrets, and these are not to be lightly told to the first one who asks for them. I release you; I don't want to know yours; but you will understand why I do not tell you mine."

"But, I am going to tell you just what you ask of me," the woman declared. "I'll prove my good opinion of you."

"It is of your own free will, then."

"Yes, of my own free will, because I trust you."

Thereupon she began and unfolded a pitiful life story, such as many another has told before her, and the ending of it was that she was seeking a revenge upon a man, and believed that Roulette Joe was the one.

"But, don't you know?" demanded her listener, with some surprise.

"I am not sure. And, all my efforts to find out have been so far in vain. If Roulette Joe was once Charles Harvart, then he is my legal husband."

"Why have you been unable to find out? Have you ever faced him with the charge?"

"No, because of the doubt. He ignores me as an utter stranger might, and while I have his acquaintance, and have tried to win his friendship, in order to have my revenge, I cannot break down the barrier."

"Yet, you believe that you are right?"

"Yes, I do. When I knew him, however, he had not the scar on his face that he carries to-day."

"And what is your name? Let me know that, introduce me to the man, and I promise you that I will find out what you want to know."

"I will do it, I will gladly do it. My name is Mercedes Harvart—if that was his true name when he married me. My maiden name was Mercedes Hiedra. Ah! if you can only find out the truth—"

She did not finish, but the yellow-haired sport saw her hand toying with the hilt of a dagger.

That was sufficient for him.

They chatted on, and were still so engaged when Roulette Joe entered the room.

As he passed their table the woman reached out her hand and touched his elbow, and he stopped and looked inquisitively.

"Roulette Joe, won't you sit down and let me introduce you to my friend?" she asked. "Cinnabar Jim, this is Roulette Joe, one of the sports of Cinnamon Gap."

The yellow-haired sport had given her his pseudonym.

Roulette Joe slipped into a vacant chair and offered his hand to the detective sport, with never a change of expression.

"Glad to know you," he said. "In fact, I would like to have a private chat with you sometime when you are not engaged. I have got a bit of information that might be useful to you."

"Yes? Well, I am at leisure any time, sir."

"But you are enjoying a tete-a-tete here with this lady. Could you drop in at the Diamond, just down the street here, in say half an hour?"

"Yes, nothing to hinder; I will be there."

"Enough said."

Roulette Joe changed the conversation entirely, from that point, and chatted affably while he took a glass or two of wine, and at last he rose and went away.

"Now, what do you think of that?" asked Cinnabar Jim of the woman he was treating.

"I think it means that you must look out for yourself, sir. If he meant you well he would not have appointed the Diamond as the place, for what was the matter with talking with you here?"

"My own idea exactly. You can do me a favor, now, if you are so inclined."

"Name it, sir."

"Go out and find my two pard—I am taking for granted you have seen my whole outfit."

"Yes, yes," eagerly.

"Well, get hold of the Dutchman and his big-whiskered pard, and tell them to be within call at the Diamond Saloon in half an hour."

"I'll do it."

"I have time to see to it myself," said the sport, "but I would be suspected, if seen, while if you are sly about it nobody can suspect you. See?"

"Yes, I see, and you can safely trust it all to me."

"And in return I will get the information you are after, or will know the reason."

The woman presently took leave of him and went out, with her fancy shawl drawn loosely over her head, and began her quest for the two mentioned members of the Big Four.

Cinnabar Jim remained in the Redlight for awhile longer; then he went forth and sauntered in the direction of the Diamond.

There he entered, with his customary easy manner.

He looked well about, but no sign of Roulette Joe anywhere.

He stepped to the bar.

"Has Roulette Joe been here lately?" he asked.

"Are you ther gent he is expectin'?" was at once demanded.

"Yes, I have an appointment with him here."

"Then et's all right. Go through that door thar at the back end of the room, and through another door that ye will see, and thar ye will find Roulette Joe waitin' fer ye."

"All right, and much obliged to you."

Cinnabar sauntered on down the room and opened the first of the doors to which his attention had been directed.

This revealed a room evidently set apart for gaming, there being several tables and all the necessary paraphernalia for that purpose.

Across the room and straight on was another door.

The sport detective crossed over and opened that and entered without a suspicion of what was awaiting him there.

The room was not very light, as compared with the one through which he

had just come, but there was light sufficient for him to see at a glance what it contained.

There were two or three small tables, with chairs, and at one of the tables sat Roulette Joe.

"Come right on," he invited.

Jim advanced, pulling the door shut after him, but he had not taken two steps when strong hands seized him from behind.

"Now, cuss yer," was grated into his ear, "I'll see which one of us is ther best man, and whether or not you aire goin' to come hyer and run things while I take a back seat!"

He had fallen into the hands of "Ornery" Ike Blossom, and Roulette Joe had leaped up and was pressing a pistol to his head.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DONA'S EYES OPENED.

Deadwood Dick conducted the Dona Juana straight to the big tent of the Great Spanish-American Circus.

He bought tickets for the reserved seats, some few of which he had noticed were not occupied when he was in the tent before, and they went in.

It was hardly probable that any one would take much notice of them, for at the moment the clowns were doing some of their funniest business and the tent was in a wild uproar.

They reached the reserved seats and sat down.

Even had Don Hunfredo been there, he would not have recognized his fair fiancee.

Dick looked all around, and presently caught sight of the proprietor of the circus standing just within the exit, watching the business in the ring.

Don Hunfredo was nowhere to be seen.

The performance was coming to a close now, and ere long it ended, amidst a great applause.

Dick gave his hand to the Dona Juana and assisted her down to the ground, and avoiding the crowd, led her out the rear way immediately after the performance.

Dona Mariquita had been in the last act, and Dick knew she would immediately seek her dressing-tent.

He had no idea of taking the lady where he had been.

He knew that she would soon discover the loss of the necklace, and the finding of the slit in the canvas would immediately follow.

While he would have enjoyed her discomfiture, alone, it would never do to take the Dona Juana there, for discovery would follow and there would be a big scene and nothing gained.

Besides, he wanted to know where those diamonds were.

It was his belief that they had fallen into the possession of Don Gilfrano.

That would account for his stealth in the matter; not wanting to be known as the thief, he had allowed Dick to get away without trying to learn his identity.

He whispered to the Dona Juana:

"If you see Don Hunfredo here, do not let him notice you, but tell me where to look."

"Si, señor."

Presently she pressed his arm, and said:

"Look where those two tent-poles stand close together; there is the Don Hunfredo!"

"Yes, and yonder comes Don Gilfrano to greet him, and— Ha! I expected it! There comes, too, the Dona Mariquita; and see how pale she is! Come come with me!"

Dick drew her with him, and they passed around to where a hanging strip

of canvas gave them an excellent place for eavesdropping. It was within six feet of where Don Hunfredo stood.

"Well, you are here, Don Hunfredo!" greeted Don Gilfrano, as he came up.

"Yes, and I am here for the diamonds, too. No more of your excuses; I will have them or have your life! I will share as I promised, and then when I shall have married the Dona—"

"Never mind threats, senor, and no matter about pledges. Come, I will lead you to the dressing-room of Dona Mariquita, and we will hear what she has to say about— Ha! here she comes, and look at her face, will you!"

The performer came up, her fists clinched, her eyes flashing.

"Where are those stones?" she demanded of Don Gilfrano, furiously. "I know you have stolen them; I expose you here and now; I demand them at your hands."

Gilfrano recoiled as if he had been struck a blow, and his face grew white.

"I have not stolen them," he declared. "I have not seen them. I have not been near your tent. Why did you not keep them on your body?"

"And drop them while performing! I put them in my shoe; no one would have thought of looking for them there, had he not seen me do it, and it was you—you!"

"No, it was not!"

"It was! You cut a hole in the canvas! You watched me, and when I was in the ring you stole them!"

"I say I did not! You—"

"What farce is this?" cried Don Hunfredo. "It is a play between you, to cheat me out of what is mine. Fool! fool that I was to trust either of you! When I had slipped the necklace from the neck of the wearer, what right had I to let it fall into your hands?"

"You were afraid to keep it in your possession, and had to have our help," declared Don Gilfrano. "But, there is no plot between us; it is she and she alone who is trying to dupe us both!"

"You lie—you lie!" almost screamed Dona Mariquita. "No one but you knew I had it, Don Gilfrano; no one but you could steal it!"

"It has not been stolen! You seek to dupe us both!"

Their Spanish ire was up, and it looked as if they would come to blows the next moment.

Of a sudden the Dona Juana fell a dead weight upon Dick's arm, and had he not caught her quickly she would have fallen to the ground.

He supported her, and hastened with her out from under the canvas, leaving the trio in a hot wrangle over the matter, though he would have remained to see it out, if possible.

There was a shanty just across from the tent, and without ceremony Dick pushed open the door with his foot and carried his fair burden in.

A woman was there, who started up at the intrusion.

"Don't be alarmed," said Dick. "This girl has fainted; do all you can to aid me in bringing her to."

Without the loss of a moment the woman set about her task, and ere long the girl opened her eyes and looked around in a bewildered manner, till her gaze rested on Dick's face.

Then it all came back to her, as Dick plainly saw by the start she gave.

"Say nothing," he said in low tone. "Get your strength and let me escort you back to the hotel. Then I will attend to the rest. Say nothing here."

And she did not. She soon recovered sufficiently to go, and giving the wo-

man of the shanty a piece of money for her trouble, Dick led the girl away to the hotel and to her room.

It happened that no one saw them, no one of the royal party, and as Dick took leave of the girl he said:

"Mind, no mention of it yet. I must get the diamonds first. Treat him the same as ever, the same as if you knew nothing."

"How can I, oh! how can I?" she sobbed. "And yet I had begun to distrust his character. But, I will obey you; you know best. You are a wonderful man, senor; I leave it all to you."

"You see, I was right when I said you must see it for yourself," said Dick. "I feared that you would scorn me if I came to whisper such a charge into your ear. Patience, now, and do what I have said, and all will yet be well. I hope to find the diamonds this night."

CHAPTER XIV.

WAH LUNG'S HAND. A MIRACLE PERFORMED.

Cinnabar Jim realized at once that he was in a tight place, and resolved to make the best of it.

"Well, it looks as if it is your inning," he coolly said, "and I have nothing to say. I have been ahead of the game all along, so I can't kick."

"Yer kin bet yer life that ye won't kick long," grated "Ornery" Ike. "I have got ther big bulge on ye now, and I am goin to carve a slice or two out of ye; d'ye see?"

"And when he gets done with ye I will finish the job," put in Roulette Joe.

"What is your grievance?" demanded Cinnabar.

"I know you and your business here, that's all. No need to say anything more about it."

"Maybe not, Howard Carver, or Charles Harvart, or whatever your real name may be. You see those two names are somewhat alike. How about that bank business?"

"Curse you!"

The fellow fired, but Cinnabar Jim had read "shoot" in his eye before his finger pulled the trigger, and a duck of the head saved him.

"Would yer cheat me?" cried "Ornery" Ike, and his fist shot out, taking Roulette Joe squarely between the eyes and toppling him over neatly, but the same act gave Cinnabar Jim his opportunity.

As quick as a flash he jerked himself free, gave a sharp whistle on his fingers, and instantly grappled with the enraged mayor of Cinnabar Gap, and went to the floor with him with a crash. And there they rolled and fought, while Roulette Joe was scrambling up.

"Clear der roadt! Py Chulius Schneez-er, ve vas goin' in mit dost blaces or pust, ain'dt id! Vhel, I pet me id vas!"

"That's what's ther matter! Git out of ther way, ye durn galoots!"

"Allee samee gittee hurt!"

Deadwood Dick, passing the Diamond at that moment, and hearing the cries quoted, ran hurriedly in to learn what was on. He had recognized the big bass of the Teuton instantly.

Just as he entered Donnerblitz hurled his ponderous shoulder against the door of the back room and carried it off its hinges, and in he went, with Perty Pete and Wah Lung close at his heels, while after them leaped Deadwood Dick, brushing men right and left.

Donnerblitz served the second door in similar fashion, and stumbled headlong into that room on his rotund paunch, while Perty Pete and the Chinee took in the situation instantly and leaped to the

aid of their yellow-haired pard. In the tumult, Roulette Joe sought to escape, but he ran plumb against a gun in the steady hand of Dick Bristol!

"Don't you be in a hurry," advised Dick. "Just wait and see it out."

The fellow wilted instantly.

Into the room after them had crowded the woman whose acquaintance Cinnabar Jim had formed, and she turned in the doorway and faced the crowd, holding them at bay.

"Don't you folks crowd the mourners here," she admonished. "Give 'em room to breathe, and when the dust settles you'll be given a chance to see which is on top."

And a drawn revolver enforced her order.

Heintz Donnerblitz was by this time on his feet, and he cried out:

"Chulius Schneezer! Ve got here yust der same, maype, an'dt id? I dink so, py cosh!"

"Ornery" Ike Blossom was a prisoner in the hands of Cinnabar Jim, and as the yellow-haired sport allowed him to get up he said:

"Pard Bristol, I want you to take charge of that fellow Carver for me; I am going to take this 'ornery' galoot up to that gospel tent to hear a preaching, so help me great!"

Deadwood Dick laughed at the idea.

"All right," he acquiesced, "go ahead with him, and I'll hold things down here with the triangle that's left of the Big Four. I am inclined to think this is turning out more of a jubilee than our worthy friend was figuring on. Go ahead with him."

"Ornery" Ike protested, but his hands had been secured, and pulling the mayor's hat down low over his face, Cinnabar Jim opened the rear door and marched him out at the point of a gun in the direction of the gospel tent, avoiding the main street. Arriving there, he ushered him in, and well down to the front, where he took a seat with him.

Meantime, Deadwood Dick had made sure of the bank defaulter, and with the aid of his trio of pards, marched him off to the lock-up, where, making it known who he was, he had the assistance of a deputy marshal at once, and the scapegrace was locked up. The woman, Mercedes, took it upon herself to remain on guard at the jail, to make sure that he did not escape. There was little doubt in her mind as to his identity.

That service done, Bristol and his pards were turning away, when Wah Lung pulled Dick by the sleeve.

"Me wantee see you, plivate," he whispered.

"What is it, Wah Lung?"

"Me gottes sparklers all light, you bettee!"

"What! You don't mean to tell me it was you who cheated me out of getting them—"

"No tellee Wah Lung it was you allee samee that leach undel tent to tealee shoe, allee samee gettee big clip on arm?"

"Well, it was, my heathen philosopher!"

"Me heap solly me hittee you; me think blame thief tly stealle march on Wah Lung; no havee that, you bettee!"

"That was right. But, how came you there?"

"Slippee undel tent, allee samee like snake, allee samee slippee out again."

"And then you had the nerve to sit up there on that seat and clap your hands at the woman as she went around the ring on one foot— Wah Lung, you take the cake!"

"Allee samee she lied mighty fine."

"But, the sparklers, where are they?" Wah Lung drew a folded rag from under his blouse and slipped it into Dick's hand, and Dick knew by the feel of it that he had got hold of the proper article.

"Wah Lung," he said, "you are a chief. Cinnabar Jim did not praise you half highly enough, was all that was the matter. When I get the reward for this bit of work, and I am going to get it, you bet! I will give you a nice little slice out of it."

"Alee samee all light," said Wah Lung, in his matter-of-fact way.

Dick proceeded forthwith to the Metropolitan, where he asked for an audience with Dona Juana and Don Hunfredo together, and they came down to the general room for the purpose.

The lady was still pale, and the don had a scowl on his mug that well became its physiognomy.

Deadwood Dick bowed low before the lady, and greeted the don with every mark of respect. Nothing in his manner indicated that he and the lady held a secret in common.

"I have welcome news for you, my friends," announced Dick. "The most welcome of news for you, Don Hunfredo. May I request the presence of my friend, Col. Coltzer, on this occasion? I am sure he would like to be here. And it might be a pleasure to all your friends, Dona Juana."

Bristol was smiling, and the very pink of politeness to the scoundrel whom he intended so soon to expose.

The don was as white as death, and the dona was trembling.

Dick gave her a sly nod.

"Certainly, señor," she said, and hurriedly left the room.

No sooner was she gone than the don demanded, in somewhat of anger and impatience:

"What is this? What is it about? What does it mean? Diablo! but I warn you have a care how you play with me—with the Dona Juana!"

"Don't excite yourself, my dear don," placated Dick, suavely. "I am not trifling with you; far from it. I have the very greatest treat in store for you. I beg you let me keep it—Ah! here is the colonel."

The don muttered an anathema as Col. Coltzer entered the room. Soon came the others, until all were quickly assembled, when Dick rose and said:

"I have asked your presence that you might enjoy with Don Hunfredo the great pleasure which I am about to give him. A valuable diamond necklace belonging to the Dona Juana was stolen, as you are aware, and the don offered me the handsome reward of ten thousand dollars—a mere nothing to him—if I would find the gems and restore them to their fair owner. Don Hunfredo, I have succeeded. Dona Juana, please receive your jewels at my hands!"

So saying, Dick took the jewels from his pocket and holding them over his hands extended them toward their fair owner, whose face lighted up with delight.

Don Hunfredo's face was furious. He could have cut Deadwood Dick's throat with a hearty good will. The possibility of the recovery of the stolen gems had looked so remote that he had never dreamed the reward would be claimed. But, then, he did not know Richard the Great!

"Why do you not congratulate me?" cried the radiant dona, turning to him, taking her cue from the detective prince and playing well her part.

"I—I am too surprised, too astounded

to speak," the scamp responded. "Can it be possible?"

"Do you not see for yourself?"

"Yes, yes; but the surprise, the amazement of it all. I congratulate you, heartily congratulate you, my dear Juana."

"And the reward, Don Hunfredo; of course you will pay him the reward you promised—But, why need I remind you of that? Senor Bristol, in addition to the reward you are to receive, accept my thanks and gratitude."

The last word was emphasized.

"And that I prize even more highly than the handsome reward," averred our Richard, gallantly. "And now a question," he added. "Do you want the thief arrested and punished? It is for you to say."

"No, I would have you spare him," was the reply. "Claim your reward, but let the matter drop at that."

Dick turned and looked at the don inquiringly.

If ever a man was in a plight, it was the Don Hunfredo at that moment. He was in the dark; he did not know just how much was known to this wonderful American detective and how much not known. And those penetrating, magnetic dark eyes that looked into his own made him most uncomfortable.

"You—you have nobly earned the reward, sir," he managed to say. "I will see that you are paid the moment I reach Spain—unfortunately I have not so great a sum at my command here—"

"But, you can raise it, Don Hunfredo; it is an obligation of honor that must be discharged immediately," urged Dona Juana.

"I—I—it is impossible; my ready funds are limited—"

"Then I must pay it myself," said the dona, proudly. "Mr. Bristol, will you and Col. Coltzer do me the honor to come with me to my room for a few minutes?"

In her room the dona gave Dick his reward. Then she sent for the don, and in their presence gave him his conge, greatly to his discomfiture. He was obliged to drop out of the royal party, and was compelled to seek the aid of his accomplice, Don Gilfrano. The dona announced her intention of going to the nearest railroad point and starting on her homeward journey, on the morrow.

Cinnabar Jim, meantime, had taken his unwilling prisoner straight to the gospel tent, as stated, and escorted him to a seat well toward the front, where he obliged him to sit and listen to all that was said.

As it had happened, no one had observed his being taken there, and no one knew where he was. All through the late afternoon service he was obliged to sit, and again through the night service. If it did not do him any good, Cinnabar remarked to Dick, it certainly could do him no harm.

But, a remarkable thing really happened. Something that was said, some word spoken—no one else will ever know what it was—touched that rough man in a tender place, and of a sudden he burst into tears and cried like a child. Certain it was that a miracle was performed then and there and "Ornery." Ike Blossom was made one of the gentlest of men! He pressed the hand of Cinnabar Jim again and again, and could not thank him enough.

A great change was wrought in that beautiful gulch. Where the gospel tent had stood that day, now stands a magnificent church, the gift of "Ornery" Ike to the people! And not a saloon can be found anywhere in that section, where Isaac Blossom owns and controls.

"Roulette" Joe was punished as he

deserved, and his wife Mercedes obtained a divorce from him and was enabled to marry again, the second time more fortunately.

As for Deadwood Dick and his Big Four, we may hear from them again.

THE END.

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